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# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HOLLYWOOD

Censorship and Morality in  
1930s Cinema

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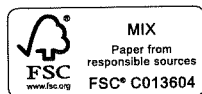
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*Down with this sort of thing... Careful now*

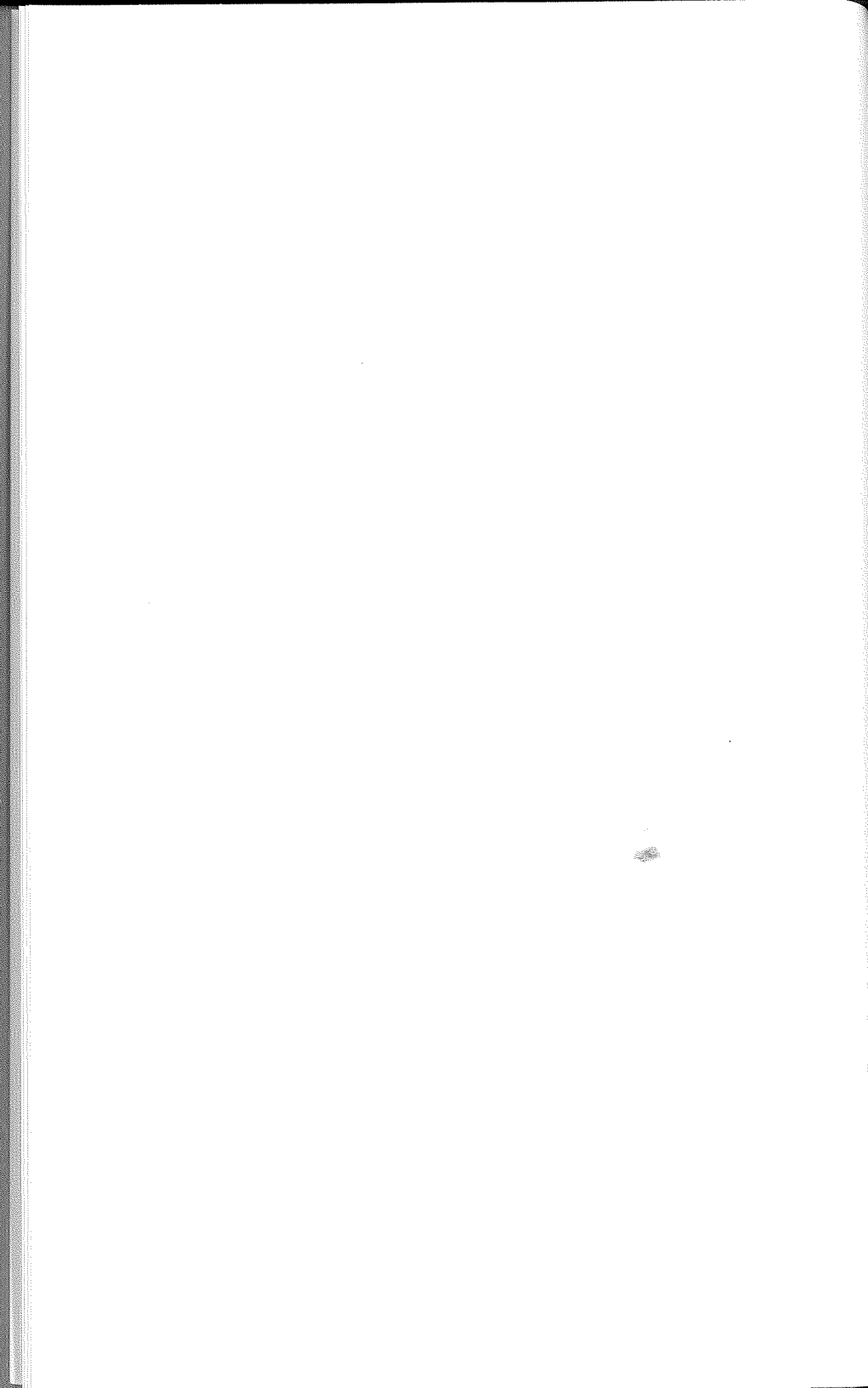
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The motion picture is the epitome of civilization and the quint-  
essence of what we mean by 'America'

Will Hays, *See and Hear* (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of  
America Inc. 1929), p. 4<sup>1</sup>



# INTRODUCTION

## CATHOLICISM AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY DURING THE LONG 1930s

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon wrote that in war there are no civilians. By this he meant that the impulse of combat, the consequences of battle, the psychological effects of conflict, and the economic burden of sustaining the war impact upon every citizen. In other words, Pynchon argued that the instigators of war sought both deliberately and subconsciously to impress its state and condition upon the entire populace. For the war to be waged effectively, so its instigators believed, the people needed the mundanity of their daily lives to be driven by and focused on the conflict. However, for the war to be prosecuted to its desired end, and for victory to bring the spoils it was designed to make available, the people also needed to be kept alienated from each other and the societal hierarchy kept vertical. The war could not be waylaid by grass-roots cultural movements or a significant shift in socio-economic and/or political structures and institutions. As Pynchon might argue, the war's impulse was to create a sense, or illusion, of mass public unity for and participation in a great cause, whereas in reality a social moral code was imprinted from above which saw the status quo further entrenched. "The war needs to divide this way," he wrote,

and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity, alliance and pulling together. The war does not appear to want

a folk-consciousness, not even the sort the Germans have engineered, ein Volk ein Führer – it wants a machine of many separate parts, not oneness but a complexity.<sup>1</sup>

We can expand upon Pynchon's thesis by adding that though the instigators of war<sup>2</sup> (or "the establishment") want a machine of separate parts and not a "oneness", they do nevertheless wish to create the illusion of oneness. In a wider context, one could argue that today we call Pynchon's impulse "the battle for hearts and minds". Indeed, Pynchon wrote of an impulse which had in actuality existed for eons, though its language and iconography may have been adapted for the times and necessities of its usage. During the middle ages it was known as the salvation of the immortal soul, where the establishment was the Vatican, and during the early modern epoch it was labelled Progress, at least according to the Whigs.

This book argues that during the long 1930s the American Catholic Church understood itself to be embroiled in a war, if not outright siege, from various aspects of the modern, secular world, including the increasing allure of monetarism, growing sexual liberation, permissiveness and tolerance, communism both domestic and international and the enduring progress of science. Consequently, it saw the adoption of a war mentality as the only appropriate response to ensure its survival and the protection of its way of life. Naturally, we are not speaking of a literal hot war but rather an embryonic or nascent cold war in which all available propaganda weapons, though most especially cinema, were deployed, in the Pynchonian sense, to create an almighty assault upon modernity. The ultimate ambition of this war was for the American Catholic Church to win "control" of the United States' primary area of cultural production, cinema, and to use it to engender a pro-Catholic social moral code among the entire US population and not simply the Catholic laity. In short, the American Catholic Church fought during the long 1930s to position itself as the guardian of American bodies and souls on a par with the legal, judicial and political apparatus. This was hardly a novel concept. As early as 1885, Pope Leo XII issued the encyclical *Immortal*

*Dei*, which stated that, "The Church of Christ is the true and sole teacher of virtue and the guardian of morals."

The Reformation 16th Century's harmful and deplorable passion for innovation [threw Christianity] into confusion... and next, by natural sequence, invaded the precincts of philosophy, where it spread amongst all classes of society. From this source as from the fountain head, burst forth all those later tenets of unbridled license which in the midst of the terrible upheavals of the [18th] century were wildly conceived and bodily proclaimed in the principals and foundations of that new conception of law which was not merely previously unknown, but was at variance on many points with not only Christian, but even natural law.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1930s, the core meaning of this statement had penetrated the minds of American Catholics. Indeed, if we substitute the sixteenth century's harmful "innovations" with contemporaneous cinema we can subsequently better appreciate the fervour of Catholic discontent towards early twentieth century American popular culture: the carrier of modernity. Indeed, by the 1930s cinema had been acknowledged, from Lenin to the Pope, as a weapon of immense power. As far as the American Catholic Church was concerned it was a weapon hitherto used for evil. However, if it could be controlled by appropriate agencies then it would become a weapon for the prosecution of good. Indeed, in 1900 Pope Leo XIII saw the importance of cinema and had had himself filmed as a means of legitimising the technology.

Though it is not in the remit of this study to examine to what extent the public *received* the propaganda, whether positively or negatively, we will see that in regards to gaining control of the means of cultural production (to which they were fervently committed), the American Catholic Church were extraordinarily successful. This is a point of vital significance because the United States had historically claimed, via all capillaries of the establishment, to be essentially secular and modern. Moreover, religious groups themselves, especially the Catholic Church, claimed to be organised not according to secular or temporal laws and codes of practice, but to spiritual, and thus border



non-specific, equivalents. Therefore, conventional wisdom holds that, by definition, twentieth century religious groups were considered, and considered themselves, independent from the state, especially in the United States. Moreover, people in the service of a religious group, that is to say, priests or monks for instance, claimed to be beholden to a higher law and power. In other words, men of the cloth lived, by definition, "outside" secular society. Indeed, writing of the United States, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan argued that the Church "does not measure its success by the standards of secular society."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, this study poses the following question: if the American Catholic Church was determined to become the guardian of the US polity, secular and otherwise, to protect itself, was it not therefore attempting to *merge* its public identity with secular institutions? This question recommends itself because if we conclude that the answer is yes; if we agree that the American Catholic Church believed that they were at war and needed to strike against their enemy, using the weapon of their enemy (cinema), then we will have problematised the bedrock of perceived American culture and history: that the Church and State have always been wholly separate.

At this juncture conventional wisdom would point out that the United States appears to be an overwhelmingly Protestant country advocating apparent Protestant values. Surely, one may assume, this denomination of Christianity would feel equally as threatened by the growth of secularism and communism during the 1930s and, therefore, surely, any lead in combating such clear and present dangers would be taken by them. Why was it then that the American Catholic Church, a minority group in the US, took the lead in wrestling control of popular culture from the supposed hoards of Godless degenerates who currently possessed it? This would be a reasonable point to make. After all, US anti-Catholic sentiment had been widely publicised both within and without the United States during the twentieth century. One only needs to glance at the materials surrounding the election of John F. Kennedy, wherein Reverend Norman Vincent Peale, the nation's most prominent Protestant columnist, opposed Kennedy's candidacy on religious grounds, not to mention the fact that JFK was to be the first Catholic president in the US' 184 years

of existence, to understand that antipathy towards Catholicism emanated from both above and below.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, following the creation of the United States many influential Protestants, such as Lyman Beecher<sup>6</sup> and Samuel F. B. Morse,<sup>7</sup> argued that Catholics could never be truly American because they were ultimately beholden to a "foreign prince", specifically the pope.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, there are several factors that ensured it was the American Catholic Church and not Protestant groups that was the central player in the long 1930s *kulturkampf*.<sup>9</sup>

This is not to argue that Protestant groups were uninterested in the *kulturkampf*. In the early twentieth century, the Protestant Church did take a firm interest in shaping US popular culture. They had been emboldened to do so by their successful efforts to implement Prohibition in the United States in 1919. In 1925, Harriot Pritchard of the Department for the Promotion of Purity in Literature and Art wrote, "Shall this [motion picture] education produce graduates of the type of the 14 year old girl murderer, of the Leopold-Loels super intellectual criminal breed ... and laugh at the Stars and Stripes?"<sup>10</sup>

However, Protestants were decidedly unsuccessful in their attempts to gain hegemony over cultural production. As early as 1906, just one year after they opened, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WTCU) were asking the Federal government to reform the 5 cents Nickleodeon. Indeed, during the 1930s the WCTU, having charted cinema attendance rates, argued that Americans and in particular youths were in greater danger of being addicted to film than they were to alcohol.<sup>11</sup> In 1932, Alice W. Mann of the WTCU Department of Motion Pictures publicly codified this theme when she argued that,

Motion pictures are having a far more injurious effect upon public morals in general than the saloon ever had. The saloon touched a few millions of people directly and these were in the main adults. The motion picture touches every man, woman and child in the whole country directly and its character moulding effect is appalling.<sup>12</sup>

In her essay *Mothering the Movies*, Alison Parker rightly posits that by focusing their efforts predominantly on youths, Protestant groups wrongly applied "Victorian tactics" and therefore missed the opportunity to develop a more holistic and encompassing class-based agenda that the American Catholic Church were later to apply.<sup>13</sup>

The WCTU was, like other Protestant groups such as Quakers, pacifist. Consequently, their polite, passive lobbying fell on deaf ears and was in general wholly unsuited to the siege-like mentality required by the *kulturkampf*. This resulted in Protestants surrendering the initiative to other more determined, though numerically inferior, groups that would be happy to employ more direct and aggressive action. Indeed, as WTCU leader Bristol French wrote in 1933, "Isn't it time to demand of local theatre managers that pictures shown on Friday nights and Saturday afternoons be chosen more carefully."<sup>14</sup> We can understand clearly from the above quotation that as late as 1933, the WTCU had yet to devise a cogent, let alone aggressive plan, to combat the representations of moral corruption that they argued spewed from out the corrosively modern pit of Hollywood. Moreover, the policy French advocated required the change in "culture" to be advanced from quarters other than the WTCU, or even the Protestant Church, in this case cinema managers. This was a supplication, on the part of the Protestant Church, to their enemy in the face of its hegemony akin to asking the fox to guard the henhouse.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, Protestants were somewhat heterogeneous in the United States. The mid-western factions, which would eventually become known by the enduring sobriquet "bible belt fundamentalists", were generally quite Victorian in attitude and were, therefore, more interested in creating a loose-knit network of reform groups along the Progressive model, best illustrated by the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA, whereas the more metropolitan west and east coast Protestants, whilst wholeheartedly adopting the above mentioned institutions, rarely agreed with the "puritanical" stances of the former.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, after 1933 the Protestant reform zeal was somewhat blunted by the ultimate failure of Prohibition and its repeal from law.

In fact, well before this Protestant organs were losing their penetrative capacities. As John Ferre has argued,

Gone were the days when Protestant press vied with secular publications to explain matters of political, economic, social, and religious importance. By the twentieth century most Protestant magazines had become either denominational house organs or speciality publications with narrow ecclesiastical readerships. The marginalisation of the Protestant press continued from 1900 to 1930, when the Protestant component of total magazine publication dropped by four fifths.<sup>17</sup>

The American Catholic Church, conversely, was far more homogenised, belligerent and willing to undertake the direct action required to affect change *vis a vis* film content, popular culture and the formation of the social moral code. Indeed, where Alice Mann, and Protestant groups more broadly, saw motion picture cultural production as "appalling", the American Catholic Church understood it as presenting a fabulous opportunity to open a new front in the *kulturkampf*.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the failure of the Protestant Church to take an effective lead, the American Catholic Church, as suggested above, possessed an exceedingly more appropriate infrastructure to wage a cultural war. Firstly, they vowed to actively change film content, which naturally would have somewhat irked cultural producers in Hollywood. However, they also promised to oppose any cinema-centred federal anti-monopoly movements and formally legislated censorship. As such, Hollywood was presented with a bargain immediately more palatable than the meek and forgettable utterances of the various Protestant movements. In the American Catholic Church Hollywood studios were to gain a partner who could provide them with protection from Washington and an image of moral serenity. In return those same Hollywood studios had to relinquish control over the screen representation of themes of interest to the American Catholic Church to American Catholic cultural producers. Indeed, as early as the 1920s the American Catholic Church had

been in partnership with the emergent self-censorship movement in Hollywood. The National Catholic Welfare Conference founded by pro-labour Father John A. Ryan was part of the earliest affiliates to William Hay's programme for film betterment (which began in the mid 1920s). Senior clergyman and *kulturkampf* stalwart Daniel Lord also voluntarily acted as an advisor on Cecile B. DeMille's biblical epic *King of Kings* (1927). In Gramscian language, as the Protestants were singing hymns to those in the trench of power, the American Catholic Church was penetrating the fortress of cultural hegemony.

In addition to a sophisticated approach to "contractual negotiations", American Catholic cultural producers also possessed a much more subtle vernacular than their Protestant equivalents, knowing with greater accuracy when to bluster and when to placate. Often they managed to do both simultaneously. Indeed, though the American Catholic Church considered itself at war with modernity and desired to appropriate the cinema to wage said war, they also offered statements such as the following, written by Archbishop John McNicholas and published in the Catholic newspaper *America* in October 1941: "The motion picture theatre is not a clinic; nor is it a doctor's consultation room or a classroom, it is not the sanctum of the minister of religion nor is it the sanctuary of the home."<sup>19</sup> This quotation is remarkable for its polyfunctional nature. On the one hand, it is a wide-eyed and innocent statement asserting, as an ingénue might, that the American Catholic Church wished merely to guide Hollywood, whilst acknowledging film is primarily an outlet for entertainment alone. However, it is also a fierce rallying cry against screen depictions of science, biology, alternate religious views and family values. Such dual meanings allowed the American Catholic Church to later present itself as merely a consultation agency with a Catholic non-specific remit (with a trade slogan that might have read, "We're simply here to help") whereas in reality it was the central institution behind cinema's promotion of traditionalism, reactionary conservatism and, naturally, a certain pro-Catholicism during the long 1930s. As Facey correctly points out, Catholics have always considered entertainment as a "natural" need for mankind, unlike subscribers to Calvinism, ergo in the United States,

during the period in question, the American Catholic Church would have understood the motion picture as the "essential character" of popular entertainment and directly within their jurisdiction.<sup>20</sup>

Another factor accounting for the Catholic determination to be the key player in the *kulturkampf* of the long 1930s was its desire to protect itself from the direct attack of groups existing broadly outside of the *kulturkampf*, including Protestant groups and others such as the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, when the openly Catholic Alfred Smith stood for president in 1928 the editor of the *Weslyan Christian Messenger*, a Protestant newspaper, wrote that he was "strongly persuaded that Catholicism is a degenerate type of Christianity which ought everywhere to be displaced with a pure type."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, *North American Review*, another Protestant newspaper, gave column inches to Hiram Evans of the KKK so that he could argue that the Catholic Church was "fundamentally and irredeemably ... alien, un-American and usually anti-American".<sup>23</sup> The American Catholic Church also understood Protestant temperance movements as anti-Catholic, seeing as the consumption of alcohol occupied an important social stratum in both Italian and Irish culture and the American Catholic Church was largely comprised, in both the clergy and laity, of immigrants of those two nationalities. Moreover, the taking of Communion, a sacred act in Catholicism, was directly threatened by the ban on alcohol.

The 1930s was also the right time for the American Catholic Church to exert influence in popular culture. Partly as a response to his repealing of Prohibition, the American Catholic Church was essentially a supporter of US president Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal more widely. Priests openly campaigned for his re-election in 1936 due to his Prohibition stance and also because his administration's federal stimulation of the economy presented increased professional opportunities to Catholics. Subsequently, 70 percent of Catholics (21.4 million people or 20 percent of the US population) voted for FDR and he reciprocated in kind. Of his 196 appointments to federal judgeships, 51 were Catholic as compared to 8 Catholics out of 214 appointments by presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover combined.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, though the Catholic population was in a minority in the US, their numbers did exceed 20 percent of the population, which

constituted, at the very least, a significant minority and may help us further account for their eventual position of significant influence within cultural production. Moreover, Catholics were the single largest undivided Christian denomination in the US and were actually in a position of arguable majority, or at least seniority, in a number of vital industrial and metropolitan centres, including New York, where, by the early 1930s, there were 3,075,428 Catholics, Illinois, where there lived 1,696,708 Catholics and Massachusetts (including Boston), which had a number of 1,448,650 Catholics.<sup>25</sup> This gave the Catholic Church a socio-cultural influence throughout the most economically and politically important cities in the United States that greatly exceeded their not inconsiderable population. Let us pause to compare the above numbers with the total nation-wide number of Unitarians (ignoring sub-sets) 59,228,<sup>26</sup> Lutherans (ignoring sub-sets) 4,244,890,<sup>27</sup> Episcopalians (ignoring sub-sets) 1,735,335,<sup>28</sup> Christian Scientists 268,915,<sup>29</sup> and the Salvation Army 103,038.<sup>30</sup> We should note that at the same time there were 1.5 million Jews officially resident in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Even though these statistics were taken from the flawed 1936 Federal Census of Religious Bodies,<sup>32</sup> they, at the very least, underscore the following points: firstly, the number of Catholics in the United States was significantly high (there were more Catholics in New York than there were "orthodox" Episcopalians in the United States, meanwhile in Illinois there were 21,512 Christian Scientists compared to over one and a half million Catholics)<sup>33</sup> and secondly that the American Catholic Church enjoyed not only a numerical advantage over other Christian denominations but, importantly, an organisational one too. Unlike America's disparate Protestant Churches the American Catholic Church was strong and homogenised.

In the light of the institutional anti-Catholicism prevalent in parallel agencies and its numerical and geopolitical influence throughout the US, it is understandable why the American Catholic Culture would take a more prominent role in the formation of popular culture. After all, America was at war with modernity, its very soul at risk. Catholics considered themselves to be the "pure faith", the keepers of tradition, and yet they found themselves chided by numerically superior though morally "inferior" parallel institutions. They also considered

themselves fit for the task of protecting America as the Church held itself to be just as American as the Protestants. Despite conventional wisdom arguing that the US was founded uniquely by Protestant puritans, the founding fathers were not bereft of Catholics. As Johnson points out, John Barry, the father of the Navy, was Catholic, as were Daniel Carroll and Thomas Fitzsimmons, both of whom were involved in the shaping and formulation of the US Constitution. Indeed, Carroll and fellow Catholic William Pacca also signed the Declaration of Independence.<sup>34</sup>

There was also an historical impulse which may account for the pre-eminence of the American Catholic Church in regard to the 1930s *kulturkampf*. According to Skinner, the American Catholic Church stemmed from Irish origins. Ireland, having suffered under English domination (arguably exacerbated by such instances as the potato famine 1845–6) effectively “missed” the renaissance. As a Catholic country it clearly bears none of the architectural flourishes of continental Europe and is bereft of Baroque and Rococo influences.<sup>35</sup> Irish Catholicism was thus Church-driven and tormented but also practical and systematic. The potato famine brought scores of Irish immigrants to the United States and those immigrants in turn brought with them a more grimly determined form of Catholicism with a resolve strengthened by having survived the rule of a hostile Empire. In addition to its Irish heritage, the American Catholic Church was geographically divorced from Rome rendering the Vatican too distant to provide succour and isolating its American congregation, compelling US Catholics to take care of themselves.

From the middle of the nineteenth century anti-Catholicism in American culture stimulated the emergent feeling of a religion under siege. This anti-Catholicism took the form of what today might be labelled as hate attacks. For example, in 1852 a gift from Pope Pius XI of stone for the Washington Monument was seized by Protestants and thrown into the Potomac river. Thereafter a broadly grass-roots impulse developed to engender Catholic sentiment among the populace. In 1884, at the Third Plenary Session of the Baltimore Diocese a resolution insisted that Catholic parents send their children to Catholic schools. There followed an intense recruitment process for nuns to



teach at these burgeoning religious academies. It was not merely formal education that the Catholics sought to address. The same diocese implemented (and these were imitated throughout Catholic strongholds such as New York, Boston and Chicago) orphanages, book clubs, magazines and hospitals.<sup>36</sup> All of which were parallel to mainstream or secular institutions providing the American Catholic Church with a quasi-cradle to grave grip on society not shared by any other religious group in the United States. However, despite the scale of these efforts they were not proselytising in nature because the institutions created were designed to further entrench pre-existing Catholic faith and support. Indeed, much emphasis was given to the stimulation of the faith within Catholic strongholds through all international branches of the Church. In 1905, Pope Pius X, in the encyclical *Tridentina Synodus*, re-asserted that to receive daily Communion the receiver must be in a state of grace, willing and with proper intentions. In turn of the century America, it was standard practice that First Confession preceded First Communion. In 1910, the pope, in *Quam Singularum*, argued that children could now receive Communion at the age of discretion (6–10 years old) whereas previously the age had been set at 14. As a consequence of this papal decree, First Communion now followed First Confession at the age of six. Therefore, nuns prepared Catholic children from the age of five and not from the age of 13, as had previously been the case. The corollary being that Catholic children were brought into the Church before any alternate influence could take hold of them and were subsequently taught in Catholic beliefs for an additional eight years.<sup>37</sup>

Given the obvious limitations in a *kulturkampf* of proselytising the proselytised, it can be argued that it was only a matter of time before the American Catholic Church came to the conclusion that in order to fight its war it would need new recruits. Here too the Catholic Church was historically well prepared. Though missionaries of all faiths and denominations had attempted to convert various heathens, heretics and infidels, many with great passion, none were committed to the task with more fervour and militancy than the Jesuits (officially founded in 1533). Indeed, their founder, Saint Ignatius of Loyola was first a knight before entering the clergy. The Jesuits brought a sense

of militarism to their religious work. This was highly encouraged by Pope Paul III as they formed the papacy's vanguard legion in the fight against the Reformation. We can see the heritage of such traditions in the actions of Archbishop John Cantwell. Unlike his Protestant counterparts who lamented at the possible negative influence of motion pictures, Cantwell argued that the damage had already been done. Accordingly, he equated contemporary California, home of the motion picture, with a latter-day Sodom. He believed in literal direct action to arrest the flow of moral pollution oozing out from Hollywood and argued that the methods of both Mussolini and Franco would be the most effective. It was said of him that, "He has set himself to do whatever he can to cope with the wrong kind of screen fare – and he has fire in his eyes."<sup>38</sup>

The combination of imported Irish Catholicism, the legacy of American Catholic education and the militarism of the Jesuitical tradition mixed with the isolation American Catholics experienced from Rome provided them with a pragmatic need to appreciate, maintain and be, at least, tolerated by the United States. This was a necessity not shared by the disparate US-based Protestant groups. In fact, one could argue, albeit somewhat flippantly, that the American Catholic Church understood the US polity with its federalised political system and monetarist-driven class immobility, to be fully compatible with the quasi-feudalistic society that the Catholic Church admired and helped to establish during its golden epoch of the middle ages. As such, it had the weapons both practical and psychological and a sense of vital patriotism required to wage confidently a war on this particular battleground. As Kevin Schultz argued, Catholics "viewed religion as not only a spiritual but also as a public, communal, even political phenomenon".<sup>39</sup> After all, the *kulturkampf* was not to be a remote, sedentary or mystical conflict staged in a monastery but a practical, hands-on war to be fought in American homes and, crucially, public spaces. It was a war to be fought not in Latin but in American English. In short, it was to be a war in which the American Catholic Church embraced, and not rejected, mass media and Americanism. Indeed, as Archbishop John Ireland put it in 1901, "May I be allowed to say to Catholics: be in the truest and best sense of the word Americans – loving

America, loving its institutions, devoted to its interests, slow to blame it, ardent to defend it...I have unbounded confidence in American liberty and American justice."<sup>40</sup>

The confusion of these elements led to the American Catholic Church becoming an active agency in the formation of 1930s popular culture. Indeed, groups from the American Catholic Church became overt Hollywood cultural producers. This was so in a number of ways. Firstly, members of the American Catholic Church advocated tirelessly for the creation and implementation of a rigid set of rules to direct what was and was not permissible to be depicted on screen. They were emboldened to do so after the Ohio Mutual Film Company petitioned the Supreme Court in 1915 to have legislated the notion that films should be protected under the right to free speech. Justice Joseph McKenna rejected the claim asserting that, "We feel that the argument is wrong or strained which extends the guaranties of free opinion and speech [to film] because they may be used for evil."<sup>41</sup> For the first time in its history, the "evil" of Hollywood, a paradigm consistent with that held by the American Catholic Church, had been codified by law. For American Catholics this success was compounded by the perceived continuation of motion picture evil as exemplified by the actions of silent movie star Fatty Arbuckle, who famously endured a court case in 1921 in which he was accused of the manslaughter of a woman who had died at his party (of which he was acquitted), and actress Mary Pickford, who had "sinfully" divorced the reputedly abusive Owen Moore on March 2, 1920, and then "sinfully" married for a second time, to Douglas Fairbanks on March 28 of the same year.

Why did the American Catholic Church find Hollywood of the 1920s so objectionable? It is important to note that for the American Catholic Church the evil of Hollywood was essentially twofold. Firstly, the *content* of the films themselves was often considered scandalous. The American Catholic Church was as uncomfortable with the social-democratic tradition of the silent cinema, which often depicted the conditions of the poor and tackled themes of civic corruption (apparent even in the light-hearted entertainment of Chaplin),<sup>42</sup> as it was with the bombastic, arrogant consumerism of Hollywood's treatment of the Jazz Age<sup>43</sup> (and other musings upon modernity).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore,

films such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) promoted, if not outright glorified, aforementioned "parallel groups" such as the Ku Klux Klan in a manner that would have profoundly unsettled American Catholic observers.<sup>45</sup> This overt distrust was greatly exacerbated in the early sound era when Hollywood shifted to more obviously adult depictions of crime and criminality (the gangster movies of Warner Bros.), sex and sensuality. As we shall see, the invention of sound allowed filmmakers to use dialogue to rationalise action. This led to a stream of "sympathetic" portrayals of gangsters and prostitutes in the late 1920s and early 1930s, enraging the American Catholic observers. Secondly, these provocative motion pictures were produced by Hollywood, a sleazy fiefdom controlled, as far as the American Catholic Church was concerned, by immigrant Jews beholden to strange rites and inherently duplicitous in nature and populated by immoral personages whose corrupt lifestyles were being glorified. Indeed, in addition to the above noted examples, the same period saw public confusion as to whether Charlie Chaplin and Paulette Goddard really were married and the much noted supposed drug abuse of Jean Harlow and alcohol abuse of Clark Gable. In short, to American Catholics this made Hollywood a contemporary Sodom and its product dangerous, subversive pornography.

As a result of the perceived sinfulness of Hollywood and the cinema, 1922 saw the creation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) Association, led by Republican conservative Will Hays. Its responsibility was to act as a trust or board of directors to which Hollywood would be accountable. In fact, in 1927, it published a nascent "contract" of behaviour called the *Don'ts and Be Carefuls*. However, the MPPDA through the Studio Relations Committee or Hays Office for censorship had no authority to enforce its contract despite a wide acceptance within the industry that some kind of code of conduct was necessary to police Hollywood. Consequently, in 1930, the American Catholic Church took the lead and wrote the Production Code; a comprehensive document which listed what should be and should not be morally acceptable for Hollywood films to depict. Though it was presented and to this day perceived as an industry device (and referred to as the Hays Code) it was, in fact, written

by two Catholics, Martin Quigley and the aforementioned Daniel A. Lord, neither of whom were filmmakers. Quigley was a lay Catholic and a graduate of the Catholic University of America. Additionally, he was the owner and publisher of *Motion Picture Herald*, a film newspaper which had long advocated for a Catholic-based set of censorship principles. Lord had also fused together his ecclesiastical role with an interest in cinema. He was a professor of Dramatics at the Jesuit St. Louis University, author of modern hymns, editor of *Queen's Work*, a morally preaching youth publication, and a Hollywood religious technical advisor, who had worked in that capacity on Cecil B. DeMille's 1927 biblical epic, *King of Kings*.<sup>46</sup>

Of the Production Code, Gregory Black has argued that, "What emerged was a fascinating combination of Catholic theology, conservative politics and pop psychology."<sup>47</sup> Lord posited that because film cut across class, religion and education it could not be afforded the same liberties as theatre, literature and newspapers, a view seemingly consistent with the Supreme Court's. It was, he argued, too popular and must be used to prove that "evil is wrong and good is right". Indeed, Lord wrote in his autobiography, *Played by Ear*, that he all too "often groaned . . . over the horrible stuff that came pouring out of Hollywood". He further elucidated upon his loathing of birth control, abortion, the theory of evolution, the growth of communism and secular education, all of which were themes that the American Catholic Church would use Hollywood to attack directly over the course of the long 1930s (and beyond).<sup>48</sup> When Will Hays was presented with the Production Code document he claimed that, "My eyes nearly popped out when I read it. This was the very thing I had been looking for."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the distinctly Catholic Production Code immediately replaced the *Don'ts and Be Carefuls* as the Hays Office's official censorship guide. In essence, the Production Code forbade films ever to question the legal and political code of the day (in other words, it advocated Americanism) and trumpeted a distinctly American Catholic interpretation of the social moral code. The Production Code promoted three "general principles": 1) No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing,

evil or sin. 2) Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment shall be presented. 3) Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation. Furthermore, it also forbade the depiction of anything considered anti-American such as flag burning whilst simultaneously advocating specifically Catholic themes such as upholding the sanctity of marriage and avoiding all references to homosexuality.<sup>50</sup>

However, the role of the American Catholic Church as a cultural producer is most clearly apparent in the so-called Legion of Decency. In 1930, the West Coast Association of Producers officially adopted the Production Code but it was perceived by the American Catholic Church to be less than rigorously adhered to in practice and in the case of MGM's risqué Jean Harlow films (of 1932–33), honoured only in the breach. In response, in 1934, the American Catholic Church established the Legion of Decency.<sup>51</sup> With headquarters located in New York, it was established with an enormous \$35,000 stipend from the Church.<sup>52</sup> Led by two senior bishops, John Noll and Hugh Boyle, its self-appointed task was to police the censorship process of Hollywood films and ensure the moral exactness of the final product. To let audiences know whether, and to what degree, the American Catholic Church approved of a film's content the Legion of Decency ascribed motion pictures with a clear and simple rating. These ranged from an "A-1", which meant "Morally Unobjectionable for General Patronage", "A-2, Unobjectionable for adults", "B, Objectionable in Part", to a "C" for "Condemned".<sup>53</sup> The reviews process was divided into west and east coast offices and entrusted to the Catholic Women's Organisation of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae. It was overseen by Mary Loomer and for three decades "Loomer's Ladies" considered themselves, as did Quigley and Lord, Noll and Boyle, on the front line of battle in the *kulturkampf*. However, the reviews office was itself overseen by Bishops Francis X. Talbot on the east coast and John Deulin on the west, preserving ultimate authority in patriarchal hands. Thus, if the Legion of Decency condemned a film some 20 million US Catholics (not to mention the world-wide Catholic population) would be forbidden, under penalty of mortal sin, from seeing it.

The Legion of Decency's executive secretary was Father Joseph Daly, a priest from New York and a professor of psychology at the College of St. Vincent. He was thus considered an ideal arbitrator of cinema as his qualifications spoke of his ability to fuse together in one office an appreciation for the Divine Mysteries with a keen understanding of propaganda, the power of suggestion and behavioural psychology. However, Daly was relieved of his position after he started to praise Hollywood's artistic contribution to cultural life. He was replaced by the 30-year-old Father John J. McClafferty who was closely advised by Martin Quigley. Despite his youth, McClafferty was not an ingénue proxy. He held a Masters degree in anthropology and had been Assistant Director of the Division of Catholic Action at the Catholic Charities of New York.<sup>54</sup> That is to say, his youth, education, experience and faith made him the perfect individual to manage the Legion's office. He would understand the modern world and its many facets, speak in its vernacular but, unlike Daly, remain steadfastly committed to the cultural war on the side of the American Catholic Church.

The creation of the Legion of Decency compelled Will Hays with almost immediate effect to abolish the Studio Relations Committee or Hays Office and create in its place the Production Code Administration (PCA). The responsibility of this new office was to ensure that Hollywood's output conformed to the Production Code in total. However, rather than subvert the Legion of Decency, or make it redundant, the PCA further enforced its values. Indeed, Joseph Breen was handpicked by Will Hays to direct the PCA precisely because he was a Catholic. Before his appointment at the PCA, Breen was the Overseas Commissioner of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and press relations chief for the 1926 Eucharistic Congress in Chicago. Breen blamed "radical teaching in our great colleges and universities" for the undermining of American culture and wrote a series of anti-communist articles in the Jesuit newspaper, *America*.<sup>55</sup> He was opposed to public discussion of abortion, divorce and birth control and believed that most cinema patrons were "nit wits, dolts and imbeciles".<sup>56</sup> That is to say, Breen too had fire in his eyes and an unswerving commitment to promoting American Catholic values whilst simultaneously

defending the body politic of the United States. Indeed, of all the many agents involved in the shaping of popular consent during the long 1930s Breen, as we shall see, was arguably the single most influential figure.

Far from being at loggerheads, the PCA and the Legion actually worked together. Prospective movie scripts were first reviewed by Breen's Catholic team using the Catholic Production Code and then sent from the PCA for review by the Legion of Decency. Moreover, any film not carrying the PCA's "Seal of Approval" was fined \$25,000.<sup>57</sup> In other words, any film found violating the approved virtues and values of the American Catholic Church's Legion of Decency was fined by Hollywood's PCA. By 1938, of the 535 films released through the PCA, only 32 carried a "B" rating (which meant "objectionable in part") and no film was condemned, suggesting that the American Catholic Church had significant influence in cinematic production.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, when appraising the merits of a prospective production and tabulating to what extent it did or did not conform to the American Catholic Production Code, the PCA utilised a so-called Analysis Chart. In order to collate the sins each script may have committed against the true faith, PCA officials were required to simply tick a box next a clearly designated "theme". Though many of these themes would be embraced by the secularity, taken in the whole they represent an extremely Catholic mindset at work in the PCA. Among the themes listed on the Analysis Chart was: "Religious Ceremonies? How handled?" This appeared alongside "Crime? Drinking? Adultery? Illicit sex? Gambling? Divorce?"<sup>59</sup> Thus we can conclude, in Gregory Black's words, that "The PCA and the Legion were linked so closely that it was next to impossible to separate them."<sup>60</sup>

To further proselytise the American masses, the Legion of Decency undertook the creation of a pledge, which Catholics were required to take in church. It was written by Archbishop McNicholas, who had referenced the theme of patriotic American Catholicism when he spoke of cinema as "a grave menace to youth, to home life, to country and to religion", a phrase incorporated into the pledge itself. In its unabridged form the pledge read, "I wish to join the Legion of



Decency which condemns the vile and unwholesome motion moving pictures.

I unite with all who protest against them as a grave menace to youth, to home life, to county and religion. I condemn absolutely those salacious motion pictures which, with other degrading agencies, are corrupting public morals and promoting a sexmania in our land. I shall do all that I can to arouse public opinion against the portrayal of vice as a normal condition of affairs and against depicting criminals as any class of heroes and heroines, presenting their filthy philosophy of life as something acceptable to decent men and women. I unite with all who condemn the display of suggestive advertisements on billboards at theatre entrances and the favourable notices given to immoral motion pictures. Considering these evils, I hereby promise to remain away from all motion pictures except those which do not offend decency and Christian morality. I promise further to secure as many members as possible for the Legion of Decency. I make this protest in a spirit of self respect and with the conviction that the American public does not demand filthy pictures, but clean entertainment and educational features.<sup>61</sup>

By 1934 some 7-9 million Americans had taken the pledge. Moreover, the pledge itself was not always enough to satisfy the Legion and many of the laity was required to sign a formal document. What is striking here is that the pledge itself does not call for a simple acknowledgment, or any other such passive behaviour, on the part of its advocates. It in fact admonishes such behaviour and commands the Legion's members to do all that they can, including petitioning others to join. In fact, the language and tenor of the pledge are purposely reminiscent of a militaristic oath such as was taken by Catholics warriors of the Spanish *Reconquista* and the Holy Crusades. In this spirit, the pledge was not administered once only. Rather, those who had taken it were required to re-pledge the oath each year on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8).

The pledge's raw, violent and colloquial language in conjunction with its use of repetition helped maintain in the churches the sense of war and siege in which the American Catholic Church considered itself. It was this zeal with which they fought the *kulturkampf* and that arguably led to another warrior Christian, World War II General President Dwight Eisenhower, to amend the essentially secular US pledge of allegiance in June 1954 to feature the distinctly Christianised phrase "Under God".<sup>62</sup>

### Methodology and Terminology

We must endeavour to keep the above described landscape firmly mind as we explore how the American Catholic Church utilised the Production Code, the PCA and the Legion of Decency to fight its war for the control of the American social moral code. I will concentrate in particular on the role of the cinema (though the American Catholic Church was also interested, to a much lesser in extent, in the visual arts more generally and literature) and the manner and extent to which the American Catholic Church employed it to attempt to shape popular consent to win the *kulturkampf* of the long 1930s. The book will not discuss literature or music (except in the context of film) or other visual arts, inclusive of painting, plastic arts, theatre and architecture, because, though important and of interest, cinema was the dominant medium through which the American elites/governments/regimes, especially the American Catholic Church, projected their themes and messages into popular culture.

In the United States, the cinema was fabulously popular. By 1939, there were between 17 and 18 thousand cinema theatres. 66 million people attended the cinema each week.<sup>63</sup> Ticket prices were around 25 cents but could sometimes be as low as 15 cents.<sup>64</sup> The total box office receipts for the year 1939 were \$659,000,000.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, contemporaries well understood the importance of cinema as a surgical tool with which filmmakers and producers could attempt to inculcate certain values and virtues into society. In 1931, journalist and academic Lemar Taney Beman wrote that cinema was "the most powerful teaching device civilization has produced since the invention of the printing

press."<sup>66</sup> In 1936, the poet and writer James Agee said, "the camera can do what nothing else in the world can do: ... perceive, record, and communicate, in full unaltered power..."<sup>67</sup>

It is vital for the reader to note that this study will concentrate exclusively on the iconography, its themes and messages *designed* for mass consumption. It will examine the iconography in its purest form. In other words, as it was intended before it had entered the public domain. It will not examine the impact of such material upon the population. That is, this book will focus on *intention* not reception. This is not because the reception, comprehension, adoption or rejection of popular culture from below is unimportant (even if measuring "impact" is a problematic issue). Rather, it is because strict parameters must be set in order to build upon important work in the historiography on the topic of American (not to mention Catholic and capitalist) social and cultural engineering.<sup>68</sup> In other words, it is important to fight this war on one front at a time. Moreover, certain logistical problems (location, access to materials, money – a curse upon my lack of swag- time limitations, and more recently volcanic ash clouds) also prevent a full exploration of every single aspect of this study's wider themes. It is also important to point out that while the following is an examination of cinema it is *not* a piece of art criticism, art history or an analysis of aesthetics. Moreover, due to the constraints already noted it will not be possible to discuss every single film produced by Hollywood during the period in question. It is not the intention here to compile a list. Rather, I will seek to demonstrate my points by using the most illuminating, representative and important examples and, furthermore, by clearly showing that they reflect a much broader trend.

I will also restrict my analysis to the 1930s. However, when it is appropriate to demonstrate the thrust of a specific trend, movement or idea I will stray into the late 1920s and the early 1940s. There are several important reasons for delimiting the book with these dates. In the United States 1929 ushered in a sustained period of economic change, centralisation and social upheaval. The Great Depression (which began on Tuesday 29 October, 1929) shattered the economy.<sup>69</sup> In 1930, 1,345 banks collapsed. In 1931, the figure increased

to 2,298.<sup>70</sup> Unemployment stood at 25 percent.<sup>71</sup> In 1933, Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the United States and created the New Deal, the umbrella term for the series of executive initiatives and legislative reforms designed to relieve the hardships brought about by the depression. Key features of the New Deal were massive industrial and relief projects. These included the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which utilised relief workers to build hydro-electric dams to provide electricity for the American South, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a pseudo-military group which hired unemployed citizens to work on rural conservation schemes, such as making irrigation systems and fighting forest fires.

The 1930s was also the decade when certain technological developments, in particular innovations in communications, became fully realised, providing those in power, for the first time, with the ability for genuine mass communication. These innovations included the advent of sound in cinema, the invention of which actually pre-dates the 1930s (*The Jazz Singer* in 1927 was the first sound film). This transformed film from a medium reliant on broad gestures and sight gags derived from the vaudeville tradition, at least in the US (e.g. the work of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd), to a medium with the capacity to tell long, complex narratives with emotive supporting music and subtle character interrelation. This made it a far more powerful form of propaganda, classic silent "intellectual" films such as Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) notwithstanding. In addition to cinema, radio became more wide spread and was particularly exploited by President Roosevelt for his "fireside chats". In other areas, important innovations in the field of architecture allowed dazzling Art Deco skyscrapers (such as the Empire State Building, the Rockefeller Center, the Chrysler Building) to be built taller (and erected with greater rapidity) than ever before. All in all, it would be fair to argue that modern concepts of mass production, information, aesthetic and consumerism began in the late 1920s and reached early maturity in the 1930s. Such innovations ensured that those in power were able to spread their message to more people, more directly and more often than ever before in human history.

1941 marks an appropriate year to essentially end the study because it was then that the United States was drawn into World War II (the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in December 1941). Naturally, due to the necessities of mobilising a society for total war, the social, political and economic agenda was altered and would, obviously, never re-align itself in exactly the same way. However, it is important to note that this change or transformation did not happen with the flipping of a switch. As such, many of the themes discussed in the following pages were still in prime usage as late as 1944 or until D-Day, as an obvious historical milestone. Thus for the United States the latter stages of World War II came to represent a most significant benchmark in time which served to divide the world into two sections: before and after. Consequently, I am coining the phrase "the long 1930s" to describe the period under discussion in these pages. Deliberately Hobsbawmian in concept, this phrase allows us to essentially restrict our examination to the 1930s with an acknowledgment that ideas and themes central to our understanding of the decade pre- and post-date a simple calendar definition. The historical process does not fully respect numerical systems whether Julian, Gregorian, Mayan or otherwise. If we can accept this then we can rightly understand the need for a study based principally on the 1930s to expand either side of the decade so as to completely present this author's meaning of that time/period to the reader.

So as to encourage precision of discourse, at this juncture it is important for us to pause and discuss the definitions of key terminology that shall be employed throughout this book. We shall begin by elaborating upon the religious vernacular before unpacking the lexicon of cultural history more broadly. The term "religion" is actually derived from the Latin word *religio*, the bond of social relations between individuals, but, unsurprisingly, it also relates to *regulare* (rule) and *ritus* (ritual).<sup>72</sup> In the context of this study, I define "religion" as a set of beliefs, values, practices and traditions based on the teachings of a religious leader, or leaders, and rooted in the worship of a supernatural power, or powers, regarded as creator and governor of the universe. This definition is deliberately broad so as not to exclude the "non-western" and "non-westernised" religions found in the US during

the period in question though, of course, the main emphasis will be on the Judeo-Christian conceptualisation. Therefore, it is important to note that this formulation, as Ragnhild Nordås points out, makes religion both salient and emotive. "The notion of belonging to a sacred order," Nordås states, "ties individuals firmly to a religious cause and leads to a strong personal commitment to a group."<sup>73</sup>

However, by acknowledging religion's dependence on varying elements of supernaturalism my definition excludes the notions that atheism and rationalism, or any/all *isms*, are kinds of "religion". Throughout this book I will make reference to "religious institutions/organisations/groups" and "religious figures/individuals". By "religious institutions" I refer to the structural aspects of a religion. This incorporates three different elements: 1) the kind of location in which a set of beliefs, values, practices and traditions can be worshiped. For example, this may include a church building or a type of church; 2) different religious groups and denominations; 3) the hierarchy of a particular religious group. However, it excludes what we may call private, personal or individual systems of faith. Lastly, I define "religious individuals/figures" as referring to those individuals who are represented as embodying the values and virtues of the belief system. Therefore, a religious individual could be a contemporary priest or a historical figure, such as a saint. Thus, by these definitions, the Pope is a religious figure and the Vatican is a religious institution.

I have and will continue to use the phrase the "American Catholic Church". This is employed not simply to denote the specific location of the Church in question but, rather, to reinforce the thesis that the American Catholic Church, by virtue of its isolation from Rome and the specifics of the Church's experience in the United States, was an institution distinct in nature and ambition, if not exactly wholly separate, from the Vatican. That said, it is also a useful means of informing the reader that unless otherwise stated the actions of the American Catholic Church pertain to the United States specifically and not necessarily the wider international Catholic community. It is also worth pointing out that this study will not lightly use the terms "Puritanism" or "Victorian",<sup>74</sup> or any derivation of either, in its thesis, except when engaging in historiographical discussion of selected points *vis a vis*

Protestantism. These concepts are ultimately not helpful as they reinforce the conventional wisdom that the US was uniquely informed by Protestant values, institutions and archetypes and, moreover, that the American Catholic Church was itself meekly observant of the Protestant Church's superiority and authority over the American cultural sphere, a view this study seeks to challenge.

Let us turn now to discuss the cultural vernacular used in this study. As has been the case above, I shall also employ the term popular culture and, to a lesser extent, public culture (though I will use both interchangeably). I do not refer to popular culture in its contemporary form, meaning the low brow, anti-intellectualised or "trashy", but rather to the mainstream, dominant space in which, as Marcuse and Gramsci have argued, the hegemonic ideas, language, iconography and myths, in all their material form, are placed by the establishment.

I will make continual reference to the "establishment" of the United States. I use this term deliberately because it lends itself to the analysis attempted here in a manner that the terms "regime", "government" and/or "State" would not. The "State" may incorporate the elite strata in a single party state such as the former Soviet Union but would fail to do so when applied to the United States because it does not encompass the elite strata in the private sector. Indeed, adopting such terminology would from the outset embed within the book a structure that spells all power as Political with a capital "P" and understands history as the story of Great Men. Indeed, this study is partly designed to problematise such interpretations of history by demonstrating that Power was not concentrated solely in the hands of diplomats, legislators or public office holders. By the term establishment, I am therefore referring to what Neil Renwick has called "a dominant political-legal-economic 'power elite'".<sup>75</sup> The establishment is thus the privileged stratum of society that makes the laws, divides the wealth and attempts to create the social norms and the social moral code. The term currently in fashion, and not without good reason, is plutocracy. However, I have elected to use the establishment primarily because it allows me to continue to refine argumentations espoused in my first monograph, *The Shaping of Popular Consent*.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, I also make reference to "cultural producers". This term should be understood to refer to a privileged group of creative artists and entrepreneurs who occupied the "mainstream" space uniquely responsible for the creation, production and distribution of cultural (in our case cinematic) stimuli designed to influence, shape and re-shape *popular* opinion. There were two kinds of cultural producer, the kind that overtly and knowingly promoted values and virtues on behalf of the establishment (to which they, at varying levels, belonged)<sup>77</sup> and the kind that championed the same values and virtues believing that they came not from above (from the establishment) but, rather, were the natural/spontaneous/proper rights and wrongs, dos and don'ts, which they had a duty to help make clear and obvious to all.<sup>78</sup> That is not to say that this kind of cultural producer was not part of the establishment. Through the privileges of wealth and influence they most certainly were. In either case, it was the cultural producer's primary function to give language, iconography and emotional resonance to the establishment's myths, social norms and social moral code. The political and ideological *savoir faire* of cultural producers was much lauded within the establishment. On November 16, 1940, White House aide Ralph Block wrote to a colleague about the Hollywood for Roosevelt Committee,<sup>79</sup> a voluntary organisation of cultural producers who used all their knowledge of movie-making to campaign for the re-election of FDR. "The Hollywood Committee," wrote Block, "was composed chiefly of amateurs. But they do not lack political sense."<sup>80</sup> In other words, Block, a seasoned political campaigner, recognised that a career in cultural production had given these filmmakers an understanding of political issues and an expert ability to communicate them (not to mention a desire to do so). Ian Scott has underlined the point. "... Politics has always played," he wrote, "and Hollywood came along to enhance a game of spectacle and idealisation. Hollywood reflects and encourages the kind of mythmaking that American politics itself has constantly engaged in."<sup>81</sup> Even if all films are not political, Scott continues, "they are all ideological".<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the mention of a cultural producer will often be prefixed with American Catholic. The phrase American Catholic cultural producer refers specifically to Joseph Breen and his PCA office, who were overt and knowing in their



activities, and, more generally, to those Academy Award-winning figures with a professed devout adherence to Catholicism such as Spencer Tracy, Pat O'Brien, Bing Crosby, Frank Capra, Walter Houston and John Ford.

### Cultural Theory and the Importance of Cinema

The theory of culture is central to this historical project. Culture can be defined in any number of ways each meaning often everything and nothing. So as to avoid ambiguity this book will closely follow the concept espoused by Herbert Marcuse, who was himself greatly influenced by Antonio Gramsci. Marcuse argued that "culture" was the "complex of moral, intellectual and aesthetic goals" or values towards which a society aspires.<sup>83</sup> He then defined "civilization" as the material base of life in the society. This serves our needs well as it provides for a distinction between the intention of the cultural product ("culture") and the reception, or appreciation, of said product among the people ("civilization"). Marcuse further asserted that the difference between these two concepts is reflected in art and literature which present values in a purified form whereas in actual life these values are necessarily realised only partially and imperfectly. "The 'validity' of culture," Marcuse wrote, "has always been confined to a specific universe, constituted by tribal, national, religious or other identity."<sup>84</sup> It shall become increasingly clear that during the (long) 1930s in America, the "universe" of the American Catholic Church covered all of these touchstones, which is one of the factors explaining why, as we shall discover, they were so successful in promoting their agenda through an essentially, or at least *originally*, secular forum, specifically cinema and Hollywood.

If in the long 1930s, the American Catholic Church sought to use cinema to promote its values it therefore necessarily looked to create an "us" group in US civilisation the culture of which would permeate from an Americanised version of Catholicism. Conversely, "there has always been a 'foreign' universe to which the cultural goals were not applied: the Enemy, the Other, the Alien, the Outcast – terms referring not primarily to individuals but to groups, religions, 'ways of life',

social systems." That is to say, the American Catholic Church's "us" group could only define itself in opposition to a "them" group, which threatened the harmony of civilisation or the "us". "In its prevailing form and direction," so Marcuse put it, "progress of the civilisation calls for operational and behavioural modes of thought, for the acceptance of the productive rationality of the given social systems, for their defence and improvement, but not for their negation."<sup>85</sup>

Despite the above musings on cultural theory, this book remains a historical study. Indeed, the ambition here is also to build upon the work of my first monograph, *The Shaping of Popular Consent* by further addressing the need for historians to pay more attention to the epistemological importance of cultural history. As I have stated previously, the epistemological value of culture lies in its ability to provide a bridge, or at least a potential convergence, between two divergent approaches to the study of history. In essence, I am urging historians to place the elements of political history, ideology and personality, and the elements of social history into a wider, cultural context. Doing so would allow us to attach genuine meaning to a society's total body of behaviour. Thus, as a corollary, we might better understand how and why social norms are formed, perpetuated and developed.<sup>86</sup>

In his valuable work, *Mythography*, William G. Doty attempted to illustrate how the polyfunctionality of cultural myths gave meaning to social norms and created what one may call a social moral code. Doty's theory advances work on the meaning of myths by challenging the assumption of their apolitical origins.<sup>87</sup> In his view, it is the myth which provides the truth of facts, events and epochs: not the other way around. "Living myths," wrote Doty,

are marked by social consensus as to their importance and often their implications. Hence we may speak of self-acknowledgment by the society that a myth is culturally important, which is one way of indicating that the myth is considered to provide a normative perspective on the whole framework of reality.<sup>88</sup>

More importantly though, Doty argues, in a model clearly influenced by Durkheim's theory of social cementing, that myths provide socio-

functional opportunities to "perform the world". In other words, to engage with a "sacred text", to recite it, to re-enact it, is to be an active agent in the perpetuation of the "world's" social norms and social moral code. In Antonio Gramsci's terms, this kind of myth was designed to provide an attractive and compelling meta-narrative so that the hegemonic culture would be accepted from below as "normal reality".<sup>89</sup> Or put more simply, as common sense. This is not to proclaim the all-encompassing hypnotic power of the myth. Not all myths "take" and, indeed, whether the myths endorsed by the American Catholic Church and promoted by cultural producers "took" in the US is not tested in this study. But the desire to shape popular culture, inclusive of myths, successfully inculcated or otherwise, is specifically relevant here and, moreover, a very important area of investigation because the study of popular culture has the potential to reveal the connective tissue between politics, ideology, personality and society.

Historically the visual arts have been the most important socio-political art form (from cave paintings to cinema) because, as Chomsky has pointed out so eloquently, human beings think most immediately not just in terms of language but also, if not primarily, in terms of visual images.<sup>90</sup> Whereas literature lacks a certain immediacy with its readership (it is after all a solitary activity requiring time, commitment, concentration and, of course, the ability to read) visual art has the power to trigger a rapid and complete rational analysis of the image in the mind of the viewer or audience member. Just by looking at a picture or watching a film an individual can, potentially, thoroughly absorb its tone, its message, and the message's consequences, without having to surrender too much time or commitment (and, one could suggest, perhaps even concentration). Absorbing the social moral code through these means may, in theory, make doing so less a chore or responsibility but, rather, a by-product of a hobby or pastime. Under such circumstances the message and the mode of its delivery would be accepted, and actually embraced, making coercion (*A Clockwork Orange* style) quite redundant. In other words, as a propaganda tool the visual arts triumphed over other art forms because inherent in the medium is the potentiality for, in Gramsci's words, "emotional simultaneity".<sup>91</sup> This was especially the case during the long 1930s because of the

developments in cinema, primarily, but also because of further developments in photography, painting, theatre and architecture.

To paraphrase Lenin, cinema is the single most important art form of the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup> Cinema's popular status, its polyfunctionality and its position as a technological innovation of the time would be reason enough to elevate it above the other arts (for the purposes of academic inquiry). But cinema's deeper importance also lay in its ability to employ fantastical special effects, emotive and intellectual montage and to combine music and sound in a *diegesis*<sup>93</sup> and non-*diegesis*<sup>94</sup> fashion. All of which meant that the medium's emotional immediacy and simultaneity were far greater than any other art form. In the final analysis, one could suggest that filmmakers were the most influential historians of the twentieth century. Indeed, most common assumptions held about historical figures (whether good or bad) tend to derive from "whiggish" motion picture representations. From Jesus Christ to El Cid, from men of all seasons to lions in winter, up to and beyond the D-Day landings cinema has attempted/helped to fashion a popular understanding of what happened in history, to whom and why. Moreover, unlike, say, theatrical performances which in some fashion, no matter how small, change from night to night, cultural producers could guarantee that once a film had been completed its message would not alter from performance to performance, region to region. In terms of exhibition, film was also a significantly cheaper propaganda medium than theatre. After the initial, and admittedly gargantuan, investment in building cinemas and developing the technology to produce the films, common sense alone tells us that the costs for transporting the reels to cinemas were relatively cheap in comparison to the expenses of transporting a theatrical show (which would include the cast, crew, sets and props).

No other institution in the American polity better understood this during the long 1930s than the American Catholic Church. The American Catholic Church had been troubled by the advent of sound in film as it offered a way for screen criminals and prostitutes to rationalise or justify their actions. These rationalisations would not go unheard. In the early 1930s some 90 million Americans visited the cinema each week. Though the effects of the depression saw that

number fall, by the mid-1930s it was still a formidable 60 million per week.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the clergy were well aware that the cinema was cheap and even offered the homeless a few hours of shelter and warmth. In short, it appealed directly to a demographic the American Catholic Church feared were most vulnerable to the propaganda effects of atheistic communism and modernity more broadly. Whether in the form of an ideology or in the guise of a sovereign nation (the Soviet Union), communism posed a threat unlike which any organised Christianity had ever faced before. Consequently, American Catholic institutions believed that this newly weaponised cinema must be wrestled from the control of communists and re-appropriated for the spiritual wellbeing of the people and to ensure the very survival of the Church itself.

Indeed, as mentioned above, since Thomas Aquinas, Catholics had seen entertainment as a natural right of the people and therefore an effort to shape cinema content sat neatly with previous and contemporaneous attempts by the Catholic Church to control literature. In 1932, parallel to the development of the Production Code, at the Annual Meeting of Catholic Bishops in Washington, a resolution was adopted calling on all Catholics to avoid "immoral" books, such as those by James Joyce, because, as Daniel Lord claimed, they were crammed full with the "sordid things of life". During one discussion, Francis X. Talbot called Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway "crawling vermin".<sup>96</sup> This was, of course, hardly a new occurrence; indeed, Cervantes included in *Don Quixote* an enlightening passage in which a priest and a barber scour Quixote's library in search of the literature that they considered responsible for his delusional malaise. By the time they are finished barely a single book remains on the shelves as each tome was discovered to contain at least something unpalatable to tradition. Of course, the Holy Inquisition of the middle ages went even further. The significant difference here is that cinema wielded an unprecedented and democratic power to reach across class, gender and educational boundaries. Simply burning the film stock would not be enough.

As with *The Shaping of Popular Consent*, whose DNA this work shares, I restrict the visual arts under discussion (here, cinema) to those designed by cultural producers for consumption by mass audiences. I do not include (unless it is with an explicitly stated purpose) the work

of mavericks or films designed for a small, niche or cult audience. It does not follow, however, that I am only discussing "blockbusters" or hugely popular examples. The popularity (or reception) of a specific work of art does not affect whether that film is worthy of discussion within the given context of any particular chapter. What does affect whether a specific motion picture merits inclusion are the values and virtues it was intending to represent and whether or not it was designed, or *intended*, to reach, and appeal to, a broad audience.

### The 1930s, the New Deal Years, Catholicism and the Cinema: A Historiographical Survey

This monograph is designed to expand upon a theme I explored in my previous book, *The Shaping of Popular Consent: A Comparative Study Between the Soviet Union and the United States 1929–1941*. In that study I examined the topic of religion and cultural formation/hegemony in both the US and the USSR. Due to the book's nature I could not permit myself a more exhaustive discussion on those fascinating themes. However, during the initial research it occurred to me with some clarity that the theme of Catholicism and cultural hegemony warranted its own study. This was particularly the case in the American example where, despite many outstanding scholarly investigations,<sup>97</sup> there seemed to be a gap in the literature. Unfortunately, this gap was located exactly where the most provocative question should have been: did the American Catholic Church make a considered and genuine attempt to use cinema to merge together its public identity with the American social moral code? In other words, during the long 1930s did the American Catholic Church attempt to make itself the unifying force of America, Americans and their philosophy of life? Though this book answers in the affirmative it makes no claim to definitively close the debate on its themes. Rather, the intention here is to present an argument that will hopefully stimulate discussion so that we, that is, historians, can continue to correct, refine and deepen specialist knowledge in this specific area. This applies equally to my own work. Indeed, in my previous study I placed the Legion of Decency not nearly as central to cultural formation as I now believe it to be. Moreover,

in my initial interpretation I understood the PCA as a pro-Catholic or Catholic-infiltrated secular agency, as opposed to the American Catholic institution that this study posits.<sup>98</sup>

My own historiographical proclivities are that one should be able to enter any significant library and find every possible permutation of each conceivable argument so that students of history can read all of them before forming their own opinion (which will naturally and somewhat healthily be that we are all mistaken). Therefore, utilising primarily archival as well as secondary sources gathered in the UK, France, Italy and the United States, the ambition of this book is to attempt to help the reader buck the conventional wisdom surrounding the PCA and the Legion of Decency and postulate the challenging argument that they were, quite possibly, the primacy agencies of cultural production in the United States during the long 1930s. Moreover, I argue that their work generated the language, themes and iconography that would define America throughout the twentieth century.

Before we proceed with a discussion of the literature directly related to our topic, Catholicism and cultural hegemony, it would be useful to provide for the reader a background to the socio-economic upheavals of the 1930s and, more specifically, the New Deal years. The historiography of the New Deal era may be broadly divided into three opposing schools of thought. On the centre and the right, historians have generally agreed that the policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt led to the creation of an American welfare state.<sup>99</sup> Most scholars advancing this idea (particularly in the centre) view it, the creation of an American welfare state, as a positive development in US history. All those historians of the centre and the right agree that the New Deal represented, if not a revolution, then certainly a defining and exclusive epoch of American history. The main exponent of the centrist view is the eminent New Deal historian, William E. Leuchtenburg. The following quotation encapsulates Leuchtenburg's position. "If an American in the twenty-first century," he wrote,

cashes a social security check [sic], flies into La Guardia airport, votes in a union election, deposits money in a government insured bank account, switches on the lights in a remote farm

house, drives on the Blue Ridge Parkway, collects unemployment compensation ... he or she will be drawing on the legacy of the New Deal.<sup>100</sup>

In his introduction to *The New Deal and Triumph of Liberalism*, Sidney Milkis complements Leuchtenburg's case by arguing that the New Deal fits into the story of American history as the culmination of the Progressive period (the striking of oil, as it were, after many years of drilling) and as the progenitor of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society reforms that were to follow less than 30 years later. Ultimately, the centre and the right argue, in Milkis' words, that the New Deal era "set the nation on a markedly different course".<sup>101</sup>

The right, as most clearly expressed by economists and historians Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, agrees with the centre that the New Deal was a significant epoch in American history and did create a welfare state; but, claim Friedman and Schwartz, by doing so the New Deal was a "tragedy" for the American nation. They argue that the New Deal was an unnecessary political intrusion into the public world of business and the private lives of citizens because traditional unfettered market responses "had ample powers to cut short the tragic process of monetary deflation and banking collapse" caused by the depression.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, they argue that the creation of an American welfare state hindered economic recovery because the New Deal's centralism and its perceived meddling with free trade stifled the innate American entrepreneurial spirit (which Jefferson and Madison referred to in terms of the faculties of the Natural Aristocracy)<sup>103</sup> and encouraged reliance upon the "charity" of the federal government.<sup>104</sup>

On the left, historians such as Howard Zinn, Richard Kirkendall and David Kennedy have long argued that the New Deal reforms, contrary to the view of the centre/right, did not go far enough towards the creation of genuine welfare provision.<sup>105</sup> In Kirkendall's words, the New Deal was in fact "an anti-revolutionary response to a situation that had revolutionary potential".<sup>106</sup> Zinn explains the consequences of this "anti-revolutionary" response: "When the reform energies of the New Deal began to wane around 1939 and the depression was over, the nation was back to its normal state: a permanent army of unemployed:



twenty or thirty million poverty ridden people effectively blocked from public view."<sup>107</sup> More recently, in his book *Freedom from Fear*, David Kennedy directly, though respectfully, criticises Leuchtenburg's theory (and more broadly, that of the centre and the right) that the New Deal inaugurated a welfare state, which ensured the security of all citizens without altering the US's libertarian foundations. Kennedy emphasises how inequitable the so-called welfare provisions really were. During the depression, in order to secure relief employment on the Works Progress Administration (WPA) an unemployed worker could not refuse private employment at pay scales prevailing in his or her community. According to Kennedy, the average WPA wage was \$52 a month but in the South it could be as low as \$27 a month. Blacks were paid less than whites so blacks refusing a \$3 per week (hardly a living wage) private job might have been denied eligibility for WPA employment.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the left argue that the New Deal reforms provided neither genuine welfare security nor new and plentiful free market opportunities to the poor.

In regards to the historiography concerning the cultural role and function of cinema during the interwar years, we must pause to acknowledge the work of Robert Sklar. Through his many scholarly examinations, Sklar has repeatedly demonstrated a subtle appreciation of cinema as a weapon with which to shape popular consent and form social moral codes. In his primary tome, *Movie Made America*, he argues that,

Not only did the movies amuse and entertain the nation through its most severe economic and social disorder, holding it together by their capacity to create unifying myths and dreams, but movie culture in the 1930s became a dominant culture for many Americans, providing new values and social ideals to replace shattered old traditions.<sup>109</sup>

Sklar further argues that most academics tend to claim that the market dictated to Hollywood what it should and should not depict and that the banks, consequently, were the most powerful civic, or political in the broadest sense, agency.<sup>110</sup>

In most respects, Sklar is absolutely correct. However, if one subscribes fully to the idea that the market was the only engine capable of driving cultural production one would, therefore, purposefully or otherwise, deny the existence of any group, institution or agency seeking to advocate an ideological agenda. This would especially be the case if one assumes that the American notion of the market is essentially un-ideological and, rather, built upon a "common sense" pragmatism. This was transparently not the case during the long 1930s, which saw not only the American Catholic Church but additionally bankers, artists, writers and captains of industry inextricably linked with politics. Moreover, Sklar claims that cinema "shattered old traditions". This fits neatly into the American perception of market liberalism representing a new, perfected form of political, cultural and socio-economic organisation. Indeed, at the core of mainstream Americanism lies the belief that the nation represents, to borrow a phrase, the end of history.<sup>111</sup> Marybeth Hamilton expresses this view when she wrote of Hollywood being only a provider of an "easily consumable commodity" in which "goodness had nothing to do with it".<sup>112</sup> Indeed, as David Lugowski put it, Hollywood's "first imperative" was always to make "a fast buck".<sup>113</sup> However, and as this work will hope to demonstrate, cinema also attempted to buttress old Catholic traditions and if it did seek to engender something new among the hearts and minds of the populace, it was, in many cases not something new but rather the re-emergence of older, even more sacred traditions that the New World had either forgotten or neglected to implement effectively in popular culture.

In the historiography directly concerned with Catholicism and cinema, most authors tend to argue that the American Catholic Church was not a proactive institution in the formation of Hollywood product but a force in opposition to Hollywood. Ruth Vasey asserts that the American Catholic Church was "hostile" toward cinema.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, the literature is peppered with claims that the Legion of Decency was merely a "pressure group".<sup>115</sup> Paul W. Facey's generally excellent and wide-ranging monograph is based upon the principle of the Legion as pressure group, even to the extent that the concept appears in the book's title: *The Legion of Decency: A Sociological Analysis of the Emergence and Development of a Social Pressure Group*. Indeed, this was also the

view put forward contemporaneously. Russell Whelan, writing in *The American Mercury* in 1945, argued that, "The Legion technically is a pressure group, and not a censor. It applies mundane pressure on Hollywood to prevent certain subjects and modes of treatment from reaching the screen."<sup>116</sup>

Of those authors who do ascribe some level of actual participation in the forming of a social moral code via cinema, many put forward the notion that the American Catholic Church and the Legion of Decency were passive agencies. Couvares writes of American Catholicism's interest being only to seek "safety", adding that "hegemonising is hard work, perhaps even a losing proposition".<sup>117</sup> He goes on to argue that, "the Dream Machine was not quite a Hegemony Machine. Although undeniably powerful, neither Hollywood nor the other cultural industries controlled the context within which their products were consumed. They therefore fully controlled neither the meaning nor the effect of that consumption."<sup>118</sup> While Couvares may well be right *vis a vis* the effect of film content upon the masses, keeping in mind that this study will not discuss the reception of material, Couvares seems somewhat neglectful of the fact that the American Catholic Church earnestly *tried* to create a "Hegemony Machine".

Furthermore, Vasey concludes that if and when they did participate the American Catholic Church did so only to add to cinema a "kind of moral credibility that had eluded it in the past".<sup>119</sup> Daniel Biltereyst agrees, describing the American Catholic Church's intention as merely to "sanitise" Hollywood productions.<sup>120</sup> Such positions create the impression that the Legion of Decency simply monitored cinema production because the American Catholic Church was generally displeased with the concept of cinema, and pay no regard to the idea that American Catholic cultural producers also sought to *create* a "culture". Recently, Johnson asserted that, "Before Breen, the market mechanism dictated what the public saw, via the lowest common denominators: sex and crime. The same was true during Breen's tenure; he merely told the industry what it could and could not get away with."<sup>121</sup> While Johnson does at least acknowledge that the Production Code and the Legion of Decency played a role in cultural production, he also reduces their impact to that of observers. All of which culminates in

a common opinion perhaps best expressed by Skinner when he wrote that, "It cannot be seriously maintained that, in 1933, the hierarchy of the Church was committed to a policy of the continuous supervision of film content."<sup>122</sup>

As a result of the quasi-consensus, historians such as Gregory Black become almost radical figures in the debate. "The Catholic Church's Legion of Decency," wrote Black, "could, and did, dictate to Hollywood producers the amount of sex and violence that was allowed on screen. The producers meekly removed any scene that offended the Church."<sup>123</sup> Black is, of course, entirely correct here. However, his thesis does not extend far enough. Though put centrally by Black and Johnson, sex and violence were only part (albeit a significantly large part) of the PCA's and the Legion of Decency's agenda. They were just as interested in the portrayal of religion and religious figures as well as those of communism, both domestic and international, and the representations of science and international diplomacy. Moreover, the American Catholic Church did not simply censor. Through "fifth columnists" such as Joseph Breen they actively embraced cinema and the formulation of film content. As the Hays Office's (the 1920s and early '30s precursor to the PCA) Jason Joy wrote in February 1931,

We are sure that it was never intended that the censorship should be destructive, picking at details and ignoring the effect of the whole picture but rather that its duty should be a constructive one of influencing ... the minds of audiences by the whole.<sup>124</sup>

R. Laurence Moore does fervently argue that a merger took place between the seemingly market-based production of entertainment materials and Christian morality, describing American Christianity as "carriers of ideological and cultural assumptions".<sup>125</sup> He asserts that the "American sectarian religions are the not-so-spiritual counterparts of American multinational corporations".<sup>126</sup> Yet he ascribes this version of the "Hegemony Machine" to Protestant control. In fairness, Moore is discussing the effect of American Christian proselytising in an international context, especially post-World War I,<sup>127</sup> which is beyond the remit of this investigation, and persuasively argues that

Protestant proselytising was "enlisted to dampen revolutionary activity against authoritarian regimes".<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, if we apply Moore's theory to our context we may agree with him when he posits that religious institutions in the United States sought to conflate "Christian expansion with American expansion",<sup>129</sup> especially if we define expansion in a domestic context as meaning the reinforcement of traditional values in the face of a perceived onslaught from secular modernity, or the re-penetration of "markets", if you will.

We must therefore conclude that despite many insightful, erudite and well-researched texts in this field there seems to be a rough consensus which portrays the American Catholic Church, the PCA and the Legion of Decency, as an interesting but relatively passive vested interest group. Moreover, when it is acknowledged that American Catholics were involved in cultural production their efforts have generally been reduced to a rather prudish, outmoded attempt to reduce screen representations of sex and violence. As a consequence, there exists an apparent lack of appreciation for the diversity of themes preoccupying American Catholic cultural producers and the depth to which they were directly involved in the creation of US myths, language, iconography and social moral code throughout the long 1930s.

Finally, it is important to note that this study differs from the existing literature in another significant fashion. As the above discussed titles demonstrate, the historiography of the Legion of Decency and Catholic-influenced film censorship tends to have been approached both chronologically and in totality. That is to say, the literature examines the entire history of the Legion until its demise in 1966, when it was reformed into the somewhat redundant National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures. Such approaches may provide more bandwidth *vis a vis* an overview of the Legion's lifecycle.<sup>130</sup> However, they can ultimately prevent a detailed examination of the specific trends, movements and ideas at work in the American establishment during the period in question, a vitally important epoch that set the template for twentieth-century cultural production throughout, arguably, the English-speaking world. Consequently, this book will closely examine the most important decade of the PCA and the Legion's relationship and it will so do via a genuinely thematic approach. That is to

say, instead of presenting case studies of film after film isolated from one another conceptually, this book will investigate to what extent the American Catholic Church sought to shape, promote and engender specific recurring themes and motifs. It will, in short, attempt to reveal that the American Catholic Church was not passive and wholly reactionary but sought to fulfil a well-conceived plan to obtain cultural hegemony.

### Chapter Overview

This book poses the question: how and to what extent did the American Catholic Church seek to control cinema so as to promote in US popular culture a distinctly Catholicised version of "American" morals and values? It will attempt to answer through the examination of four key themes, each discussed in a separate chapter. The first chapter will focus upon Mysticism and the Supernatural. One of the defining features of Catholicism, as opposed to Protestantism, is its belief in the magic of religion and the Divine Mysteries of the Sacraments. This is best exemplified through Holy Communion and the Eucharist in which wine is literally turned into the blood of Christ. If we can assume that the American Catholic Church did indeed hold significant power or influence in the formation of screen production might we not therefore also assume that an emphasis would be placed upon the screen's depictions of the Mystery of their religion? However, if the American Catholic Church did not hold such sway would we then not expect to see Hollywood remaining very broadly impartial on this score and thus refrain from promoting too overtly one religion, or version of a religion and its spiritual tenets, at the expense of others? This chapter is presented first because it provides the reader with the monograph's "essential" argument. The depiction of the American Catholic Church by the American Catholic Church is central because by first explaining how the Church represented itself and its faith we will then be able to fully explore and appreciate how it presented its values and themes of interest not all of which were directly related to religion. In other words, chapter one provides us with the key to understanding the

American Catholic Church's own *don'ts and be carefults* which, as we will see, were not what one might expect. Consequently, chapter one will feature a further unpacking of the argument begun here in the introduction and at times a rigorous historiographical analysis. If that makes chapter one less "immediate" than the reader would like I apologise, though further stress the importance of establishing the American Catholic Church's meta-narrative, if we can call it that, from the start. By doing so from the outset we can locate the source of the river and therefore provide the following chapters with a stronger, fast current.

In chapter two we shall look at the representation of sexuality and sensuality. The historiography is in general agreement that when the market mechanism dictates screen output, depictions of titillating sexuality will feature prominently. Therefore, if the American Catholic Church had no significant internal or creative influence over cultural production we would certainly expect this to be the case. However, if the PCA and the Legion of Decency had to some effect a dominating grip on Hollywood we would expect the reverse: that is to say, would we not expect a veritable ban on any discourse on sexuality and sensuality? To explore this theme the chapter will broadly be divided into three sections. The first will study the representation of female sensuality, the next will discuss homosexuality and the final section will look at religious figures and their relationship with the concept of sexuality. In the third chapter we will discuss representations of war, conflict and international diplomacy. We will examine to what extent the American Catholic Church depicted the war in which it felt embroiled via three factors, depictions of actual combat and fighting, specifically relating to World War I, the evils of communism and its position regarding Nazism. The themes of chapter two and three, of course, recommend themselves additionally because they essentially cover the topics of sex and violence, which much of the historiography, as discussed above, puts central to the American Catholic Church's interests during our period. Chapter four is titled "The Temporal World" and features a discussion as to how the American Catholic Church sought to control the representations of secular Americanism and patriotism, race, including anti-Semitism and immigration, crime and criminality

and finally the notion of science as sin. In other words, chapter four explores the relationship between the American Catholic Church and the legal definitions of American citizenship and belonging.

The above themes have been carefully selected to provide the reader with an appreciation of how the American Catholic Church represented itself and its values as well as those of its various enemies ("us" and "them" groups) in a spiritual, material and legal context during the period in question. Naturally, given the thematic (as opposed to chronological) approach we will see the repetition of several films, employed and re-employed as examples, throughout this study. In each case, the very best efforts have been made to ensure that every specific facet of the picture under discussion is directly relevant to the theme in hand. If this sometimes irks the reader I apologise: it is however a necessary evil if one wishes to approach this topic in the original, revealing and dynamic way that is the ambition of this book. Finally, and as mentioned above, it is not the intention here to provide a so-called definitive or all-encompassing text. If post-modernism has taught us anything it is that none exist anyway, anywhere on any subject. Rather, the ambition here is to occupy a space left hitherto vacant by the established literature and to stimulate scholarly debate in a field of tremendous significance toward understanding not only the inner mechanisms of the United States but also the American perception of the Western world's twentieth century more broadly.



# CHAPTER 1

## MYSTICISM AND THE SUPERNATURAL

One of the defining features of the Catholic faith, as opposed to Protestantism, is its belief in the magic of religion especially the Divine Mysteries of the Sacraments. This is best exemplified through Holy Communion and the Eucharist in which wine is literally turned into the blood of Christ. Mysticism permeates throughout the entire body of Catholicism. Indeed, Catholic saints are required to have committed three miracles before they are canonised and the Immaculate Conception is exceedingly more central to the Catholic faith than it is to other Christian denominations. Whereas a Protestant minister leads the congregation in biblical interpretation and adherence, a Catholic priest speaks directly to God on behalf of his flock, as best illustrated by the tradition of using only Latin in Mass and by the priest's facing away from the congregation so as to become a conduit between the temporal and spiritual worlds.<sup>1</sup>

If we can assume that the American Catholic Church did indeed hold significant power or influence in the formation of cinematic themes might we not therefore also assume that an emphasis would be placed upon the mystery of their religion? That is to say, would we not expect Hollywood to produce films which depicted the priest as existing in a sphere separate to the degenerations of the modern world, concerned only with the eternal salvation of the human soul in state of almost divine grace? Would we not expect to see religious figures

portrayed as sombre though calming influences providing spiritual sanctuary from the material evils of American society? However, if the American Catholic Church did not hold such sway would we then not expect Hollywood to remain very broadly impartial and thus refrain from promoting too overtly one religion, or version of a religion, at the expense of others? Indeed, given the essentially "secular" nature of the United States, would one not expect secularism to be promoted? At the very least, given the common assumption that the US was/is an almost exclusively Protestant nation, if religious institutions and figures were represented at all might one not expect them to be largely Protestant?

To better contextualise and understand the actions of the American Catholic Church in regards to our theme of mysticism, we must begin the analysis by returning to our central thesis. During the long 1930s the American Catholic Church understood itself to be embroiled in a war of both attrition and annihilation. It was not merely imperilled by a literal assault from "institutions", and agencies, determined to radically alter the status quo, such as the Great Depression, the Soviet Union, Comintern and domestic communism more widely: there were also direct anti-clerical forces working inside the United States. In 1928, the Irish-American Catholic Democratic candidate for president, Alfred E. Smith was soundly thrashed by Herbert Hoover after anti-Catholic groups like the Ku Klux Klan told voters that if Americans elect a Catholic, the president will soon be on his knees kissing the papal ring but not before Washington DC is immediately renamed Piusville or Popton.<sup>2</sup> The American Catholic Church also saw the attacks on the international Catholic Church as an obvious and real threat to itself. Anti-clericalism, particularly in Spain, and ever dwindling Church attendance numbers in Europe when fused together arguably created in the minds of American Catholics a nascent domino theory: if Spain should fall, so the theory would go, the impulse would then be carried across the Atlantic. Moreover, anti-clericalism in Spain would be interpreted as proof of communist infiltration of Europe, which would therefore extend the grip of communism from Europe into Asia, via the USSR. Consequently, anti-clericalism would then threaten the US from both the Atlantic and the Pacific

oceans. Indeed, had it not already begun to spread? In 1936 only a third of the US population (both Protestant and Catholic) reported attending Church services once a week while in the ten years following 1926 contributions to Churches (both Protestant and Catholic) fell by 36 percent.<sup>3</sup> The effects of the depression may account for this decline in gifts and attendance but it was still a frightening trend for the American Catholic hierarchy.

Furthermore, Catholicism, whether American or otherwise, can be marked by its ability to provide its followers with certainty. As Wittgenstein wrote,

I believe that every human being has two human parents; but Catholics believe that Jesus only had a human mother. And other people might believe that there are human beings with no parents, and give no credence to all the contrary evidence. Catholics believe as well that in certain circumstances a wafer completely changes its nature, and at the same time that all evidence proves the contrary. And so if Moore said "I know that this is wine and not blood", Catholics would contradict him.<sup>4</sup>

This certainty is not based on experience or empiricism, in fact it is quite distrustful of such paradigms, but faith and belief. Consequently, the American Catholic Church *believed* with certainty that war was upon it. They *believed* with certainty that it was a ~~war~~ war with multiple fronts, some open others covert, and they *believed* that the primary weapon of the enemy was cinema. Indeed, in a book published by the Legion of Decency in 1948, which listed the categorisation of every motion picture it had examined since its inception, William Scully, Chairman of the Bishops Committee on Motion Pictures, and Bishop of Albany, New York, wrote:

Truly, more than any other single means of recreation and relaxation motion pictures are far and away the most popular. While they are particularly attractive to the young, nevertheless, their enthusiasts and patrons are found among all age groups in every strata of society. Therefore, in greater or lesser degree all are

influenced in the restful, unguarded moments by the power of the motion picture, for good or evil.<sup>5</sup>

More than simply acknowledging the weapon of the enemy, the American Catholic Church believed, again with certainty, that they must liberate the technology from the control of foreign hordes of degenerate, anti-clerical villains and use it against them, to destroy them ultimately and conclusively. In other words, cinema was to be used as a weapon of God. Indeed, in 1933, Joseph Breen and Martin Quigley met with the apostolic delegate to the United States, Monsignor Ameleto Giovanni Cicognani. In this meeting they impressed upon Cicognani their certainty and in a speech to the Catholic Charities in New York City, Cicognani proclaimed:

What a massacre of innocence is taking place hour by hour! Catholics are called by God, the Pope, the Bishops, and the Priests to a united and vigorous campaign for the purification of the cinema, which has become a deadly menace...<sup>6</sup>

Not only does Cicognani's language use the vernacular of war but his call to arms essentially took the form of a papal directive. Indeed, it was issued less than a year before the formation of the Legion of Decency and if this were to appear as mere coincidence one must consider the fact that it was Quigley and Breen who wrote Cicognani's speech.

Given this, would we not expect the American Catholic Church to embark upon an aggressive and systematic portrayal of their concept of certainty inclusive of the mysteries of Catholicism? After all, in 1910, Pope Pius X called for the exclusion from seminaries and universities anyone "who was in any way imbued with Modernism".<sup>7</sup> This assumption would be further cemented by the fact that whilst Catholic numbers were indeed declining in Europe they actually rose in the US. This was partly because of Latin immigration but mostly due to hard working priests and the well established networks of Catholic education and other social agencies.<sup>8</sup> By the early 1930s, Italian immigration accounted for some 4 percent of the entire US population which

constituted an enormous growth when considered that they would barely register on any governmental census just 60 years, or one generation, previously. During the same period the number of Catholic priests totalled 32,700.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, teaching brothers had, unlike their Protestant counterparts, no families, and in fact very few friends, to compete for their time so they were free, and not to mention determined, to dedicate themselves to Catholic education not only inside the classroom but outside of it too.

Moreover, the early 1930s saw what could be described as a systematic failure of the United States project. As mentioned above, unemployment stood at 25 percent,<sup>10</sup> the nation had been psychologically battered by the stock market crash and its subsequent wave of suicides and depression-related fatalities. In early 1932, *The New York Times* reported that,

After vainly trying to get a stay of dispossession until January 15 from his apartment at 46 Hancock Street in Brooklyn, yesterday, Peter J. Cornell, 48 years old, a former roofing contractor out of work and penniless, fell dead in the arms of his wife.

A doctor gave the cause of his death as heart disease, and the police said it had at least partly been caused by the bitter disappointment of a long day's fruitless attempt to prevent himself and his family being put out on the street...<sup>11</sup>

Never had the US experienced such inverted (or reverse) social mobility as previously unassailable individuals plummeted through the various networks of social strata with rapidity and force. Consequently, strikes increased, resulting in a corresponding wave of anti-strike police brutality. For example, in 1934, the year of the creation of the PCA and the Legion of Decency, a strike by teamsters in Minneapolis, prefaced on the transportation of goods, was widely supported throughout the city and soon practically nothing was moving (except for trucks carrying milk, ice and coal, which were given exemptions by the strikers). To break the strike the police attacked the teamsters and two men were killed. 50,000 people attended their mass funeral. The autumn of 1934 saw the biggest single strike which

involved 325,000 textile workers in the South, and by September 18, 421,000 sympathetic textile workers were on strike throughout the country.<sup>12</sup> Writers and musicians such as John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis and Woody Guthrie were openly questioning the very soul of America. In one representative example, Guthrie's 1940 *This Land is Your Land* begins as a paean to the magnificence of bucolic America before tarnishing its beauty with the stark reality of contemporary America life.

When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,  
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling,  
As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:  
This land was made for you and me.  
As I went walking I saw a sign there  
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing".  
But on the other side it didn't say nothing,  
That side was made for you and me.  
In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,  
By the relief office I seen my people;  
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking  
Is this land made for you and me?<sup>13</sup>

In response, the New Deal ushered in a phase of enormous government directed industrial projects such as the TVA. The emergence of skyscrapers such as the Empire State Building (constructed in 1931) and the Rockefeller Center (construction work began in 1930), designed to provide palaces of the people in such hard times, radically altered the literal and figurative landscape of contemporary America. Consequently, many Americans would be forgiven for interpreting the 1930s as a period of divine retribution, as if God did to the US with economics as he had done to Sodom with fire. As such, one could understand why so many Americans might seek solace and advice from the Catholic fathers, who promised to replace chaos with certainty, and why those same fathers believed a holy war was necessary to reclaim their promised land and prevent the sky from falling.

This was clearly the goal of the PCA and the Legion of Decency however, and crucially, they attempted to achieve their goal not by promoting the vagaries of Catholic mysticism but instead by presenting Catholicism in a simplified manner. By depicting a skeletal, digested version of Catholicism, the PCA and the Legion of Decency could transcend anti clerical reaction, or even secular and Protestant scepticism, by presenting their ideology as mere common sense. The ambition would therefore be to use cinema to promote a social moral code that was essentially Catholic in concept though it utilised a broader Christian rhetoric. Indeed, in the preface to the Legion of Decency's motion picture review catalogue the language reads only of the "Christian people" and not specifically of Catholicism, adding that, "The Legion reviews and classifies entertainment motion pictures solely from the view point of morality and decency".<sup>14</sup> Of vital importance here is that the language deliberately states that motion pictures are entertainment, which runs contrary to the litany of Catholic diatribes, already documented here, in which cinema is presented as an educational weapon. Moreover, the quotation also assigns to the Legion the role of nothing more than reviewing and classifying motion pictures, which appears both benign and passive, whereas in reality, they were actively complicit in the formation of cultural production, as we shall demonstrate.

Thirdly, though the phrase "morality and decency" may also appear as a benign if not outright functional concept, it is actually one that is inclusive of all the tenets of Catholicism *vis a vis* acceptable modes of thought and behaviour. Indeed, it cleverly fuses together the notion of secular morality, which arguably the law is designed to formulate, and sin, which is a peculiarity almost specific to Catholicism and certainly to Christianity. Indeed, what we see here is that the Legion of Decency did not so much describe its enemy as sinful, as one would expect, but as immoral, which is appreciably different. The idea was to merge together sinfulness with the more secular interpretation of morality. Certainly, lust and vanity, for instance, can be considered negative attributes in an entirely secular environment. In other words, those traits can exist as "negative behaviour" outside of a religious context and irrespective of religious teachings. However, they are not

considered "crimes" in the secular world as they are in the Catholic; indeed, lust and vanity are two of the seven deadly sins: the most grave of sins to commit. Moreover, in the unfettered free market of American liberalism they could be argued as positive traits driving forward invention. Given the context in which they were promoted, one should understand such traits and behaviour not simply as immoral but as inescapably religious, particularly Christian, in tone. The value of doing this was twofold. Firstly, describing villains using a well established and secular language would help, in theory, to carry the point over to members of society unfamiliar or unconvinced by American Catholic rhetoric. Secondly, it would serve to promote religious figures as individuals actively engaged with the "real world" thus further promoting, and possibly improving, their social significance.

The text of the Legion's catalogue further adds that, "It is to be noted that until 1939 it was the policy of the Legion not to publish the reasons for its objections [to various motion pictures]".<sup>15</sup> This can be understood as designed to make the objections appear less like the distaste of ivory-towered theologians but, once more, as common sense. Another good example of the promotion of this concept occurred in October 1934. The Civil Liberties Union wrote to the Legion of Decency to express its concern that the Legion may be acquiring something of a stranglehold on American culture, therefore limiting free expression. By way of an open letter the Jesuit newspaper, *America* on October 6, responded thusly:

Just who is supposed to answer this letter [from the Civil Liberties Union] it does not make clear. It seems to harbour the notion that the Legion is a society like itself, with officers and dues and by-laws. But the Legion is merely several million Americans who have signed a pledge binding themselves to stay away from immoral movies. The Legion is a movement, not an organised body.<sup>16</sup>

The Legion thus promoted itself as a common sense movement advocating common sense principles which, as it just happened, were also Catholic principles too. This is not to argue that the Legion presented



itself as secular. As noted above, that was certainly not the case. The ambition was to soften the mysteries of Catholicism so as to present secular, or American, morality and Christian ideology as inextricably compatible with, if not stemming from, American Catholicism. The Legion has "given unselfishly of themselves and of their time" so reads the Legion catalogue, "in order that God's handiwork, the souls of human beings might not be corrupted by the blight or evil of motion pictures."<sup>17</sup>

One excellent example of the Legion's notion of a simplified Catholicism in practice was the 1936 film, *Captains Courageous*. In the plot, a rich, spoilt child, with no discernable religious affiliations, is lost overboard whilst on an Atlantic Crossing with his father. He is rescued by the simple, though decidedly Catholic fisherman, Manuel, played by Spencer Tracy, himself a devout Catholic. During their time on the ocean, the boy learns of the joyousness of a simple, "common sense" life. This is best illustrated in the scenes where he is taught how to fish by Manuel. Indeed, Manuel later describes heaven, not in the official Vatican rhetoric of choirs of singing angels but rather as a place where there are "plenty of fish". He thereby merges together the simple, "common sense" act of fishing with a state of heavenly grace and, moreover, informs the audience that it is the observation of these activities which will be rewarded by a place in heaven.

In the film's dénouement a ferocious storm threatens to capsize the boat. Manuel heroically sacrifices himself so that the others may live. Entangled with the ship's rigging his arms are thrust outwards in an obvious crucifixion pose. Manuel's sacrifice not only saves the ship's crew but it seemingly Catholicises the boy, who, once back on dry land and reunited with his family, enters a Catholic church and lights a candle in honour of his friend.

The themes of simplicity and a skeletal, demystified version of Catholicism were lauded in the film's reviews. On March 24, 1937, *Variety* described Tracy's Christ-figure as possessing a "simple manliness".<sup>18</sup> The same day the *Hollywood Reporter* described the film as having a simple, non-Catholic specific, "theme of faith". On March 25, 1937, *Motion Picture Daily* wrote that, "the story has power and simplicity". In a further denotation of the significance of this iconography

and language, Tracy won his first Oscar for his performance as the Portuguese sailor and the film was naturally awarded an A-1 rating by the Legion.

Another demonstrative example is the 1943 film, *Going My Way* in which Bing Crosby starred as a tennis-playing, crooning priest, Father O'Malley. The initial script depicted the character as something of a rebellious young man to which Joseph Breen at the PCA objected. In his recommendations for changes (read, required changes) sent to the studio in August 1943, Breen made no mention of any material which may upset Protestants, Jews or any other religious institution, however he did make it clear that in its current incarnation the script "may give serious offense to Catholic patrons".<sup>19</sup> He went on to add that "the characterisation of the three priests [at the centre of the original treatment] might well be re-examined and, possibly, revised considerably in general tone and flavour."<sup>20</sup> Breen's concern stemmed not from the fact that the mysteries of Catholicism went undepicted but that the priests were portrayed as "thoroughly undignified". The biggest crime committed by the script was that "Father Timony at times appears to be definitely obnoxious".<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it was of paramount concern to Breen that priests be represented as intelligent, engaged and communicative men of the people and not sombre servants of God enjoying a form of spiritual splendid isolation. Breen further told producer Luigi Luraschi that, "Father Fitzgibbon's remark, 'I will not permit Three Blind mice to come between myself and my God', is likely to give offense because of its suggested ignorance on the part of the priest and should be changed."<sup>22</sup>

In the final product Breen saw to it that Father O'Malley's rebellious side had been finessed into mere playfulness and that his singing was utilised as a tool to promote the simplicity, or openness, of American Catholicism. This is perhaps best illustrated in the film's signature tune, *Going My Way* (written by Johnny Blake), in which Crosby joyously croons the following:

This road leads to Rainbowville  
Going my way?  
Up ahead is Bluebird Hill

Going my Way?  
 Just pack a basket full of wishes  
 And you should start  
 With Sunday morning in your heart  
 'Round the bend you'll see a sign  
 "Dreamers' Highway"  
 Happiness is down the line  
 Going my way?  
 The smiles you gather will look well on you  
 Oh I hope you're going my way too<sup>23</sup>

The song clearly extols the values of a simplified Catholicism with its thesis asserting that by keeping Sunday morning, the time for Church, in one's heart a simple soul can find happiness and a place in heaven, or the colourful Rainbowville in the song's vernacular. Such themes were bolstered in the film, most explicitly in a scene in which O'Malley explains that he entered the priesthood to prove that religion is not something grave and alarmingly serious but rather something active and vital, which he further demonstrates by striking the low and high chords on the piano respectively.

In March 1945, Cardinal Villeneuve praised the film on national radio. "Another consideration to be derived from this picture," he said,

is that moral pictures, and even pictures depicting the supernatural life, are far from being bad box office ... This motion picture industry has a wonderful mission to accomplish ... A picture like *Going My Way* is a good example and carries its own reward to those who have dared to produce it.<sup>24</sup>

Not only does Villeneuve suggest that the film's producers are going to heaven for their magnificent work in promoting the American Catholic Church's agenda but he also argues that the idea of serving the Church, making popular entertainment and the achievement of wealth, or the preservation of the American Dream, are synonymous. This was further demonstrated when, in May 1944, the producers

elected to debut the film not to the public but to American soldiers still embroiled in World War II, which may also be interpreted as a further demonstration of the "war mentality" of the American Catholic Church during this period.

This is not to argue that there were no "classical" interpretations of Catholicism upon the American screen during the long 1930s. In fact, one of the period's most successful depictions of Catholicism was just that. The 1943 film, *The Song of Bernadette* was based on the life of Saint Bernadette Soubirous who, from February to July 1858, in Lourdes, experienced 18 visions of the Virgin Mary. The film was to win five Academy awards including Best Actress in a Leading Role (for Jennifer Jones). So important is the film as the clearest, most overt promotion of Catholicism (and its Mysteries) in US cinema during the long 1930s that it is worth pausing to unpack both its content and significance. The film is replete with images of the Mysteries of Catholicism featuring as it does miracles, apparitions, doubt, suffering and explicit classes of catechism. Most obviously, Bernadette's first vision of the Virgin Mary is accompanied by a series of powerful intercuts depicting the mother of Christ carrying a pearl rosary, wearing a white dress with a blue girdle and roses at her feet. Later in the film, Bernadette is obliged to enter a convent. There she is rigorously schooled in theology. Moreover, Bernadette is later diagnosed with tuberculosis of the bone. Despite her profound suffering she barely mentions the acute pain. Indeed, the novice mistress responsible for Bernadette's training informs the audience that such suffering and silence are necessities if one intends to walk the path of holiness. In the film's finale a terminally ill Bernadette, lying in her bed, expresses her fear to Father Peyramale that she remains unworthy of experiencing such visions. However, moments before she passes away Bernadette once more sees the Virgin and with a cry of "I love you, I love, Holy Mother of God" she reaches out for the apparition before falling back dead. The Mysteries of Catholicism are perhaps most directly promoted after the opening credits, when a written prologue reads:

This is the story of Bernadette Soubirous who lived in Lourdes, a village in southern France close to the Spanish border. For those

who believe in God, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe in God, no explanation is possible.

The film received strong praise from the PCA and the American Catholic Church more widely. In January 1944, Joseph Breen sent a letter to a Chicago priest reporting that "Archbishop Cantwell was so favorably impressed with the picture that he sent out a letter to all the parish priests throughout the Archdiocese asking them to urge their people to see the picture at all costs." Breen received a letter from producer William Perlberg in March 1944, thanking him for sending a clipping about the film that appeared in *Columbia* magazine. Perlberg confided that "Although I have never saved a clipping about my private life or any publicity on any motion picture I have made, I confess I am saving everything I can get hold of which has been written about 'Bernadette'."<sup>25</sup>

However, *Song of Bernadette* was not without its production problems. Many in the American Catholic Church were deeply uncomfortable with the Virgin Mary being represented on screen. This sentiment was exacerbated by the casting of Linda Darnell, who at the time had an almost pornographic reputation in conservative circles (which was not aided by the fact that she was also pregnant at the time of filming). Moreover, despite the film's success and its overt embracing of "classical", or remote, Catholicism it remains the exception rather than the rule for this period. In fact, historically it can be best understood as perhaps a moment of transition between the representations of the American Catholic Church's supernaturalism, as depicted by the pious Bernadette in Lourdes, to the everyday, cheerful, neighbourhood "good chap" priest who loves sport (as seen in *Going My Way*). Indeed, *Song of Bernadette* features Charles Bickford as Father Peyramale, a genuine historical figure, reshaped by Hollywood into a robust, masculine priest who gives homilies on morals to the young Bernadette and therefore further buttresses the period's image of the priest as a physical, temporal force.

This is not to argue that all American Catholics were in favour of the "good chap" principle in the representation of their Church and faith. Indeed, on August 25, 1944, in the Catholic newspaper, *The*

*Tidings*, a certain Father Glenn robustly criticised *Going My Way* for not depicting the Catholic-specific Mysteries. "The Catholic religion [as shown in the film]," he wrote, "is neither more nor less than 'sociology' by failing to deal with personal sanctifications of the presence of God, the real aim of human existence, the Sacraments, the meaning of Mass and so forth." As a final condemnation of the film, Father Glenn added that, "it lays stress on works alone and gives no time to articles of faith".<sup>26</sup> Glenn's dissatisfaction with the film stemmed from his interpretation that through it American Catholicism was reducing itself to the tone and content of Protestantism. However, Glenn was unappreciative of the fact that this was a deliberate ploy on behalf of the American Catholic Church, and the PCA and the Legion of Decency more specifically, to use an already popular, accessible and pre-existing language to advocate the primacy of its institution.

He was reminded of this by Chaplain Thomas E. Madden, who was selected by the American Catholic Church to respond to Glenn's letter in *The Tidings*. "Father Glenn's fundamental objection," he states, "to *Going My Way* seems to be based on the false premise that the picture is a complete and exhaustive study of rectory and parish life. As I see it the producers aimed at presenting a delightful comedy with a Catholic flavour. In this they succeeded. To say that the picture is unCatholic, anti-Catholic and merits a 'C' rating [from the Legion] is rhetorical extravagance if not sheer nonsense." As Madden points out, the function of the PCA and the Legion and the ambition of their influence on *Going My Way* was to engender amongst the American populace a "Catholic flavour", which would, if not directly lead them into the Church, where they would doubtless be schooled in the Mysteries as Glenn desired, certainly generate a theme in popular culture that presented American Catholicism as an open, welcoming and patriotic institution.

This was further buttressed by the Catholic writer William H. Mooring, who, in another clear demonstration of unity with the Legion of Decency, also responded to Glenn's diatribe. "If there are to be no motion pictures dealing with Catholic action," he wrote, "unless time is taken in each to explain the Divine Mysteries of the Sacraments and the whole teachings of the Church then Hollywood dramatists will

feel inclined to turn for inspiration to the Salvation Army and Aimee Semple McPherson."<sup>27-28</sup> With clarity he continued,

If we are not to see on the screen a cassock without also being shown a chasuble or take a peek inside the Rectory without taking (for the beliefs of non-Catholics) a full course of Catholic instruction, there is no further hope of motion pictures from which non-Catholic civilians might snatch a glimpse of Catholicism at work as distinct from devotions.<sup>29</sup>

In this quote, Mooring fully endorses the PCA and the Legion's intended representation of the American Catholic Church. Moreover, by employing the word "civilians" and not citizens, individuals or even subjects he also developed further language designed to enunciate the American Catholic Church's belief that the institution was embroiled in a war.

*Going My Way* enjoyed enormous success domestically. The film's promotion of a common sense Catholicism, that is to say, an accessible American Catholicism was further entrenched by Crosby winning the Academy Award for Best Actor. Moreover, its themes, images and language were extolled by international Catholics as well. In November 1944, the Archbishop of Panama, Francis Beckman, wrote to Paramount Studios to congratulate the producers. "The greatness of mind, joined with the spirit of abnegation and the healthy rejoicing of life are marvellously represented," he gushed, "by the priests who are the principal actors."<sup>30</sup> One presumes that Beckman intended the nouns "priests" and "actors" to be used the other way around. Yet accidental or otherwise, this syntax issue does provide an interesting insight into the power cinema had to create a fusion of identity between an actor and a character, which can be extended to a fusion of film and reality or culture and civilisation, which was exactly what the American Catholic Church hoped to achieve via *Going My Way*. Beckman was joined in saluting the film by the Argentine newspaper, *Criterio*, which on November 30, 1944, published the following in its editorial.

As regards the unconventional young priest, [his actions] are simply those of many a saint: to try and convert by the most adequate means. The film is stupendous from the Catholic standpoint because it will prove to a host of agnostics that Catholicism is not at variance with joy or with normality and natural feelings.<sup>31</sup>

Not only did *Criterion* chime in harmony with the argument of Breen and the Legion but it also suggested that a practical and open Catholicism was in fact the true and historical nature of the institution. Most revealingly, *Criterion* also spells out the very method employed by the American Catholic Church in relation to the presentation of the Divine Mysteries and the American masses: "to try and convert by the most adequate means". Indeed, if the American Catholic Church believed itself to be at war then it would need recruits.

In fact, so successful was the American Catholic Church in the employment of these "adequate means" that they even won (or "recruited") wholehearted support from various Protestant and Jewish groups. In direct reference to *Going My Way* one review, written on May 17, 1944, and published in the *Citizen*, noted that, "In fact, there's nothing about the story or the treatment that wouldn't apply just as well to any faith".<sup>32</sup> This non-Catholic support extended far beyond the simple appreciation of one motion picture. Indeed, it enveloped (or, again, "recruited") the entire process of "institutionalisation" that the American Catholic Church was committed to during the long 1930s. In 1934, 41 of the diocesan reports to the Catholic Episcopal Committee made explicit reference to Protestant and Jewish activities in support of the Legion including members of such Churches and faiths even taking the Legion pledge. The Council of Jewish Women and the Sisterhood of Temple Emmanuel in Denver, for example, secured 1,000 pledges; Nashville Protestants took some 23,000 pledges and in Houston the number was as high as 60,000.<sup>33</sup> The *Catholic Christian Century* reported on the matter on June 24, 1934. "It has been heartening to see the Protestant reaction to the launching of the Catholic crusade," the article read. "Thousands of Protestant ministers and



laity... say: 'Thank God that the Catholics are at last opening up on this foul thing as it deserves. What can we do to help?'<sup>34</sup> Indeed, one Protestant minister said of the Legion that, "I only wish the Protestant Church was as vigorous in this matter".<sup>35</sup>

This is not to argue that American Catholics sought to hide their Catholicism from the screen. There were many examples of the Legion seeking to promote Catholicism as clearly distinct from other Churches and denominations of Christianity. We have already noted *Song of Bernadette*, in another example one of the required readings for the reviewers who comprised Looram's Ladies was Richard D. Skinner's *Morals and the Screen* (1935 and published by the Lay Organisation's Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference).<sup>36</sup> Skinner, himself a devout Catholic, had produced a practical, step by step guide to help facilitate an appropriately American Catholic review process. He wrote of Catholicism being involved in a war of both national and spiritual defence and stated clearly that, "Any Catholic group attempting to judge the morality of a given play must be willing to base its judgements solely on the Catholic standard of morality and must not be surprised if this brings a storm of protest from those individuals and groups who have an entirely different standard."

Indeed, the Vatican was quite vocal in its expression of gratitude to their American brothers. Having publicly paid tribute to the work of the Legion, in autumn 1935 the Vatican Secretary of State, Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII), toured the United States meeting with Quigley and Breen along the way. In a speech he stated that,

The Bishops of the United States were determined at all costs to safeguard the recreation of the people in whatever form that recreation may take. Because of that vigilance and because of the pressure brought to bear by public opinion, the motion picture has shown improvement from the moral standpoint, crime and vice are portrayed less frequently; sin no longer is so openly approved or acclaimed; false ideas of life no longer are presented in so flagrant a manner to the impressionable minds of youth.<sup>37</sup>

However, what is important to note here is that in addition to acknowledging the role of the American Catholic Church in the formation of a pro-Catholic, or an American Catholic-infused, social moral code, Pacelli also mentions the will of the people so as to create the impression that there existed no divide, gap or gulf between the views of secular or non-Catholic Americans and those belonging to the American Catholic faith.

We have understood why the American Catholic Church considered the long 1930s, and particularly the depression years as an "invasion" perpetrated by modernity and we have seen their response, *vis a vis* the promotion of their own faith. An important question remains: why did American Catholic cultural producers, notable exceptions notwithstanding, represent a simplified, skeletal version of their faith, as we have clearly seen, in which the Mysteries of *Bernadette* were replaced with the "good chap" principle of *Going My Way*? On this point the existing historiography is somewhat divided. Gregory Black contends that cultural producers in Hollywood did promote a positive image of the American Catholic Church, but, he argues, this was not a conscious or willing choice by Hollywood. He claims that by its nature and composition, Hollywood was an open and democratic industry which did not seek to shape the role of religious institutions and figures, Catholic or otherwise. Rather, Black posits that Hollywood preferred to approach and represent the social and economic issues of the day. However, he goes on to argue that the democratic nature of Hollywood was "held hostage" by the hierarchy of the American Catholic Church and its desire to inculcate its own, more conservative values into American popular culture. Thus, Black concludes that Hollywood's liberal cultural producers and the American Catholic Church's reactionary conservatives fought against each other for control over the American public mind.<sup>38</sup> Sympathetic to Black's conclusions, Furio Columbo argues that the combative, anti-Hollywood nature of the American Catholic Church had "grown out of a constellation of 'anti' campaigns: against sin and secular humanism ... against the news media and mass communication."<sup>39</sup> Indeed, until the 1960s priests were not permitted to attend theatre performances. The suspicion of the stage would certainly have carried over to the cinema *a fortiori*.

Historians such as Robert Booth Fowler disagree with this conclusion. He argues that while it is true that the American Catholic Church did campaign against what it considered to be sin and did advocate the virtues of traditionalism it did so not out of negativism but, rather, in order to *promote* the official virtues of Americanism. That is, despite factional differences, the American Catholic Church was working not separate to but *with* cultural producers in order to create a kind of faith and worship that transcended the differences between religious denominations and promoted a fervent belief (in a religious sense) in the irreducible goodness of America and its political system. "American religion," Fowler argues, "and its Churches ... defended the established social and political order."<sup>40</sup>

In *The Shaping of Popular Consent* I argued that the truth of the matter was actually a fusion of these two arguments.<sup>41</sup> However, given the ideological composition of the PCA, the content of film output and the existence and activities of the Legion of Decency, I am now compelled to argue that if Hollywood cultural producers were bullied into a pro-Catholic position, then the bullies were at least to some extent American Catholics well positioned *inside* the Hollywood machine. That is to say, whilst Fowler's interpretation appears the more convincing of the arguments posited above, neither position has properly understood that branches of the American Catholic Church and Hollywood became entwined. True, Catholicism often presents a view that challenges several of the assumptions of modern liberal, secular, democratic, capitalist countries, including, notably, the United States. Catholicism has to question, for example, positive attitudes towards self-interest, materialism, wealth and economic growth as goals, happiness on Earth as the aim, and Darwinistic competition as desirable. Nevertheless, during the period in question, the *American* Catholic Church was favourably depicted by cultural producers, who were, in the case of the PCA, American Catholic cultural producers. Indeed, this religious institution actively participated in the promotion and defence not of America per se but of an Americanised form of Catholicism and a Catholicised version of Americanism. In other words, the American Catholic Church was portrayed, and portrayed themselves, as integral to the security and perpetuation of the political status quo, despite the

Roman Catholic Church holding many contrasting views to it.<sup>42</sup> Or in Pynchon's vernacular, they sought to create a "oneness" that would enable them to survive the attacks of their enemies and prosecute (and eventually win) the *kulturkampf*. Without appreciating its Catholic origins, historian Richard Maltby referred to a "patriarchal capitalism" fearful of its own demise during the long 1930s.<sup>43</sup> This phrase, adapted to be understood as incorporating American Catholicism and American liberalism, provides a clear and useful translation of Pynchon's "oneness". Indeed, as one writer in the Catholic newspaper *Commonweal* put it in 1941, "I am integrally part of America, America is integrally part of me!"<sup>44</sup>

Thus, through cinema, American Catholic cultural producers attempted to merge together the traditional virtues of secular patriotism and notions of Divine Providence. The idea was to inculcate into American popular culture a view of the world that understood God and country, American Catholicism and the political status quo, as a single, unified object of devotion. As David Chidester points out,

In religious nationalism, the state, and not simply a general, collective, shared culture becomes the ultimate sacred reference point for religious devotion, commitment and ultimately sacrifice ... American religious nationalism has provided a powerful source of legitimation for the political order in American society and the sense of sacred national mission in the world.<sup>45</sup>

Unpacking this argument, Allen D. Hertzke has suggested that the reason the American Catholic Church understood themselves to be primarily American, and wanted this reflected in popular culture, stemmed from the fact that the United States did not develop its religious denominations, groups and sects from the splintering of one national religion.<sup>46</sup> Rather, Hertzke explains, these different, pre-existing groups had at some point during its 150-year history chosen to come to America. Some groups, like the Jews, had come fleeing persecution while others, like the Pilgrim Fathers, had come with the belief that the New World was a prosperous land where one might earn a better future. Catholics of course, as already discussed, came largely

from Ireland where they had fled from British imperialism. Whatever the reasons, cultural producers fostered the notion of America as both a homeland and protector. That is, America was not simply portrayed as the land of the free and the home of the brave but as the country where freedom and bravery were protected, encouraged and rewarded.

When it came to promoting the establishment's merged Catholic-American public image Hollywood led by example. One of Joseph Breen's key contributions to the PCA, and consequently the process under discussion, was the introduction of "compensating moral values" as a creative device. According to Breen, whatever "sins" were committed by on-screen characters must be compensated by "sufficient good". In fact, each film was required to have a stern moral lesson to teach the public. This would involve the introduction of a character who would clearly inform the "sinner" in question that he or she is doing wrong, which would then lead said character on to a path of suffering and punishment. This concept was exceedingly Catholic in principle requesting, as it did, the presence of mortifying guilt and suffering in the heart of the sinner. However, Breen's concept also called for the promotion of patriotism as a compensating moral value. In short, the PCA and the Legion of Decency saw to it that the Hollywood censorship machine promoted property and law but also the inviolability of the human person and the sacredness of religion.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, this concept was supported by Daniel Lord and Wilfrid Parsons, the Jesuit editor of *America*, who congratulated the film studios for having established "of its own accord" an "ideal dreamed of by every educator and Churchman", specifically, "a state of mind where the citizen ... obeys the public moral law".<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, in 1929, Hollywood's nominal chief censor, Will Hays, wrote *See and Hear: A Brief History of Motion Pictures and the Development of Sound*. In it he promoted the idea that no matter what religious institution an American citizen subscribes to, or attends, "America's people do not speak of themselves as primarily Germans, Englishmen, Greeks or Frenchmen; as Catholics, Hebrews, and Protestants but as Americans."<sup>49</sup> Tellingly, in the same text Hays also stated that, "The motion picture is the epitome of civilization and the quintessence of what we mean by 'America'."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, many of the

Jewish immigrants who became Hollywood's power brokers changed their names, and personal histories, so as to publicly "Americanise" themselves. For example, the chief executive of Twentieth Century Fox, William Fox, had prior to his American citizenship been called William Friedman. The popular actor, Paul Muni, had changed his name from the decidedly Jewish Friedrich Muni Meyer Wiesenfreund and screen superstar Edward G. Robinson had been born Emmanuel Goldenberg.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the movie mogul, Louis B. Mayer, who was of Russian extraction, chose July 4 (American Independence Day) as his official birthday.<sup>52</sup> The idea, apparently well inculcated, was that via their Americanism they would, perhaps inadvertently, also support the Catholically flavoured social moral code. As David Desser argues, "American Jewry was predisposed to adopt and adapt emerging trends in the culture at large".<sup>53</sup>

The 1934 film *Manhattan Melodrama* provides an excellent example of how American Catholic cultural producers gave iconography to this theme. The film begins with events set at the turn of the twentieth century. Two childhood friends, Blackie and Jim, are orphaned after a terrible blaze aboard a riverboat claims the lives of their parents. They survive the fire because of the heroic actions of a Catholic priest, Father Joe. The priest introduces the boys to the Jewish Mr Rosen who offers to adopt them. When asked if they will consent a confused Blackie says, "but I'm not a Jew and neither is Jim". Rosen replies, "Catholic, Protestant, Jew? What does it matter now?" Though these words promoted a sort of religious egalitarianism in the United States, it still remained that it was the Catholic priest who acted as its inspiration. After all, it was the priest who had saved the children and found them a new home. The film further promotes this theme when we later find Trotsky standing on a soapbox preaching about revolution. He predicts that there will soon be a revolution in Russia that will provide a model for America to follow. Speaking above the crowd, Rosen tells Trotsky that while a revolution may well be necessary in Tsarist Russia there is no need for one in the United States because everybody is equal regardless of race or religion. That is, Rosen, the Jewish immigrant, dismisses Trotsky's radicalism and his reason invokes the Declaration of Independence, which first gave language to the "self-

evident" American truths "that all men are created equal". However, as noted above, this version of America was still portrayed, subtly or even subliminally, as built upon Catholic foundations.

The merging of American Catholic institutions with the secular US public image was promoted not only by cultural producers but also by high-ranking members of the establishment, including the American Catholic Church. In 1939, President Roosevelt dispatched Myron C. Taylor to the Vatican as a de facto Ambassador. He was to be the "hotline" between the Episcopalian President and Pope Pius XII. "I shall be very happy," FDR wrote to the Pope, "to feel that he may be the channel of communication for any views you and I may wish to exchange."<sup>54</sup> Initially there was public disquiet from other American religious groups upset that Catholicism and the Pope should be recognised in such a fashion. Many groups, including Baptists and Methodists, claimed that the administration's decision amounted to an official ranking of one religious institution above the others. In response, cultural producers criticised dissenting religious institutions and portrayed them as treacherous and un-American. Under the headline, quoted from the first paragraph of the secular US Constitution, "We, the People", the *Washington Post* wrote, "At the very moment when our Protestant groups were complaining of Mr Taylor's presence at the Vatican, Herr Hitler was engaged in putting the screws on Pope Pius through Signor Mussolini ... They [Protestants] might just as logically demand that we sink our battle fleet."<sup>55</sup> It was not long after Taylor's appointment that the "Protestants" withdrew their objections. Indeed, on February 20, 1940, the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ of America officially approved Taylor's appointment without complaint. Moreover, in a statement issued on Christmas Eve, 1939, ostensibly addressing the appointment of Taylor, the Catholic Archbishop Spellman formally merged American Catholicism with notions of secular Americanism. Discussing freedom of speech and religion in the same context as belief in free trade, he wrote,

As an American, living, working and willing to die for the welfare of my country and my countrymen, all of them, I am very

happy that President Roosevelt has harmonised the voice of Pope Pius XII with his own ... President Roosevelt is our leader, the leader of a free people determined on a peace for ourselves, desirous of a peace for others. We are a people who believe in, who practice and defend freedom of religion (dissemination of truth, speech, assembly and trade).<sup>56</sup>

We may conclude that the American Catholic Church did not seek to depict priests and the American Catholic Church more generally as remote or sombre. Moreover, and more importantly perhaps, neither did the Legion work with the PCA to represent the Divine Mysteries of the Sacraments. However, the American Catholic Church did attempt to engender into popular culture a simplified version of Catholicism that portrayed it as an open, communicative, in step with the times and leading the people. Moreover, the American Catholic Church saw to it that this interpretation of American Catholicism was merged together with traditional concepts of Americanism so as to portray being Catholic as being American and, vitally, the generic codes of Catholicism as comprising the essential facets of patriotism.

This theme is best illustrated by the recurring motif (throughout the period in question and beyond) of the priest as superman. Religious figures, especially the contemporary priest, were portrayed as dedicated to the spiritual enlightenment of the people but they were not represented as quiet and retiring, sombre and isolated. Rather, they were depicted as both spiritually and physically superior to normal men.<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey Mahan calls these individuals "Supersaviors", and argues that they functioned as "replacement Christ figures".<sup>58</sup> I would argue that they were not so much replacement Christ figures per se. Rather, their devotion to American Catholicism and to the American way of life saw them invested with a power to deputise for Christ, to some degree. As historians Martin and Ostwalt point out, priests were "major heroic figures in crime films; shoulder to shoulder with FBI men, revenue agents, and other agents of morality, they became part of a phalanx for truth, justice and the American way."<sup>59</sup>

However, the superman priest was more than an establishment agent. As Robert McElvaine argued, "The self centred, aggressive,



competitive male ethic of the 1920s" had been discredited as a result of the Great Depression.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, the American Catholic Church was concerned that patriarchal legitimacy had been negatively affected. The superman priest was designed to restore that patriarchal legitimacy and further entrench it during the darkest hours of its existence. He was an immovable force with the power to redeem through simplified Catholicism and patriotic fervour. The character of Father Jerry Connolly from the film *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) provides an excellent example. In the film, Connolly (played by real life Catholic Pat O'Brien) not only tends to the spiritual needs of his parishioners but is also a man possessing extraordinary physical strength. Not only does Connolly land a knock-out punch to a drunk who he finds taunting the rough-and-ready street kids of the title, he is also the local community's basketball coach. Moreover, he is renowned as the man who ran a blistering 90 yards against New York University during his college football days. His moral resolve and physical courage are illustrated by Connolly's attempts to "rid ourselves of the criminal parasites that feed on us".

In an attempt to help protect the people of New York from gangsters, Connolly leaves his cloistered church and assumes a role more akin to a crusading policeman, protecting the law and the souls of men as if it were the same thing. His actions unsettle the criminal underworld to such a degree that they order his assassination. However, Connolly is protected by his former childhood friend, now a top-level gangster, Rocky. Despite their antithetical careers, Rocky respects, admires and loves Connolly. Recognising the priest as a genuine force for good in the world, Rocky kills the gangsters organising his murder. In doing so, Rocky is captured by the police, subsequently tried and sentenced to death by the electric chair. Connolly visits him shortly before the sentence is completed. He begs Rocky to meet his death screaming "like a coward". Connolly does not mean to humiliate him; rather he is trying to deter the street kids in his community from embracing Rocky's gangster lifestyle. If they see their hero kicking and screaming, so Connolly argues, they will see the sense of a good and honest lifestyle. Rocky initially refuses, but at the moment of truth fulfils Connolly's request. Rocky was played by James Cagney and so his

false self-humiliation also undermined the image of the glamorous, rather attractive gangster which Cagney had often played and which concerned both the moral authorities and Cagney himself.

Thus, Father Connelly, the gangster fighter, was a man of action in both a spiritual and temporal context. The film's promotional material further reinforced these themes. The review in *Variety*, published November 26, 1938, praised what it described as the "thoughtfully conceived character" of Father Connolly. "Pat O'Brien," it read, "gives an eminently credible performance as the ... two fisted, compassionate priest."<sup>61</sup> Another example was the review of the film by students of Glendale High School, distributed by the studio as promotional material. One student wrote that "Pat O'Brien does particularly well as Father Jerry Connolly, and he makes the observer aware of the dignity of the priesthood."<sup>62</sup>

The same character-type was also promoted in films such as the 1937 movie, *The Hurricane*. It was directed by John Ford, who was himself a devout Catholic. Indeed, his real name was John O'Fiernan. In the film a native sailor on a French colonial island is wrongfully imprisoned for killing a man in a fight. The governor has no interest in the affairs of the natives and the poor sailor is left to rot. Desperate to be with his young sweetheart he breaks out of jail to return to her only to be seriously hindered by the onset of a violent hurricane. In the film, C. Aubrey Smith played the wise and tough priest, Father Paul. This character served as the moral lynchpin of the story. Smith's Father Paul was the only person of substance able to criticise the French colonial governor (on behalf of the sailor hero) and as such is the primary defender of law and American virtues. Moreover, he is a vigorous protector of the native population (including the sailor hero) as he performs acts of decidedly Catholic charity, thereby demonstrating to the viewer that the priest defends *all* elements of society. Later, when others flee the imminent hurricane, Father Paul is the only European who stays, offering his church as a sanctuary. Finally, as the hurricane tears the island apart the priest sacrifices himself so that the others may live.

The reviews of the film singled out Smith for special praise underscoring the prominence of the superman priest motif in popular

culture. On 5 November, 1937, *Variety* wrote that "C. Aubrey Smith distinguishes the sympathetic part of the priest who is compelled by his humanity to aid the outlawed pagan youth."<sup>63</sup> Here, the language refers to the priest's humanity and not his Catholicism. The term "humanity" in this context is quite apparently used as a synonym for his trust in Americanism and American virtues. However, his Catholicism is undoubtedly referenced through the use of the term of "pagan", pagans being, of course, among the first non-Christians to be Catholicised when the religion became the official faith of ancient Rome. The *Hollywood Reporter's* commentary was even more direct in its appraisal. "C. Aubrey Smith," read the review, "as the island's devoted [that is, Catholic] and heroic<sup>64</sup> [that is, patriotic] priest draws an unforgettable portrait."<sup>65</sup>

Of course, we have already discussed Spencer Tracy's performance as the heroic Catholic sailor who nobly sacrifices himself in *Captains Courageous* and it should be remembered that Tracy himself was a devout Catholic. Tracy won his second, and consecutive, Academy Award for his portrayal of another Catholic figure, this time a superman priest, Father Flanagan, in the 1938 film *Boys' Town*. The film is based on a true story in which a heroic priest starts a kind of reform school-cum-sanctuary for homeless, orphaned or abandoned boys. Flanagan uses tough, often quasi-violent measures to instil the proper values into his charges but he does so out of love. As he puts it, "I know that a mother can take a whip to the toughest boy in the world, and he forgets it because he knows that she loves him." The film's central relationship is between Flanagan and the troubled boy, Whitey Marsh (Mickey Rooney). Marsh repeatedly runs away but always returns (because of hunger or an accident to a friend). He is punished by Flanagan but always encouraged. Finally, when he joins his elder brother's criminal gang it seems Marsh has fled for good. Flanagan refuses to allow Marsh's potential to be spoilt and corrupted and with the assistance of the boys under his charge, he captures the gang and earns Marsh's respect and loyalty. Once again, the priest is an active agency in the preservation of American values and norms as well as the salvation of souls, which were portrayed as part of the same equation.

The representation of the priest as the protector of America's social moral code has ever since often been a key norm for cultural producers. As we have discussed, Bing Crosby played a youthful, socially engaged priest, Father O'Malley, in the 1943 film, *Going My Way* and won an Oscar for his performance. However, O'Malley was not simply a likeable character with wit and humanity. He too was physically both bold and dynamic. The character is shown to be a keen and rather talented tennis player. He also leaps, in a single bound, over a tall hedge whilst dressed in his priest's attire. Indeed, Bill Cunningham in his review, published in the *Citizen*, described O'Malley as "boyish, athletically and musically".<sup>66</sup> He goes on to more keenly describe the screen identity of the priest as both Catholic saviour and American exemplar. O'Malley's "clean, decent belief in God", writes Cunningham, provides him with "respect for ideals, sympathy, kindness and the application of common sense of whatever perplexes us".<sup>67</sup> Key here is the reference to American Catholicism as common sense. Father O'Malley advocates a simplified Catholicism that was presented as interwoven with American patriotism. This merged American Catholic-patriotic American paradigm, or more appropriately "way of life", was then defended by the superman priest. Crosby went on to reprise the character in a loose-knit sequel, 1945's *The Bells of St Mary's* for which he was again Oscar-nominated (it was thus the first time an actor had been nominated for playing the same character in two different films). Finally, it is not irrelevant, and must be emphasised, that Crosby, like Tracy, Ford and O'Brien, was also a very active member of the American Catholic community.

The superman priest was also depicted in various other films both within and outside of the period under discussion, and indeed this is a theme that we shall return to in later chapters, including, but not limited to, *The Fighting 69th* (1940) and the World War II film *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943) in which Preston Foster played Father Donnelly, the charismatic and virile fighting chaplain. In the opening lines Donnelly is referred to, like Connelly, as a football champion. William Friedkin's 1973 film *The Exorcist* featured the heroic Father Damien Karras. Not only was Karras a former champion boxer, and a keen runner but he was also a priest and a psychiatrist. Thus, like Fathers Connolly, Paul and O'Malley before him, Karras was a superman who could protect his

fellow citizens from evil in a spiritual, intellectual and physical capacity. Moreover, Jason Miller (who played Karras) like O'Brien, Smith, Foster and Tracy was a beefy, virile man. The superman priest, while always beholden to the codes of his faith, was never portrayed as an effeminate or non-physical man. In fact, the 1939 film *Baker's Wife* received a "B" rating from the Legion, which explained its classification as motivated by an "irreverent treatment of a priest character".<sup>68</sup>

If we can accept that the American Catholic Church promoted a simplified Catholicism and merged it with Americanism, a theme best promoted by the superman priest, we are compelled to return to a question first raised in the introduction. Why was it that the American Catholic Church, and not another Christian institution, specifically Protestants, became the group to lead the charge in fusing together this religious-American social moral code? This question recommends itself because 1) conventional wisdom argues that Protestantism and Americanism were already tightly intertwined, despite the Founding Father's claims that Church and State should be definitively separate; and 2) the project of the American Catholic Church might arguably be understood as a "Protestantisation" of Catholicism. After all, Protestant ministers already inhabited the secular sphere and enjoyed many of the "secular" privileges denied to Catholic priests, including, but not limited to, marriage. Why did Protestant groups, therefore, not recognise this and simply pick up the reins? The answer may possibly be the natural corollary to the theme that saw Hollywood encouraged to promote a simplified version of Catholicism which non-Catholics could appreciate. Moreover, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, through the League of Decency the American Catholic Church had an institutional framework from which they, unlike other religious groups, could actively participate in the creation and shaping of the approved mainstream culture. Secondly, with the international situation in Europe on a knife-edge it was the Vatican which seemed to have the most influence toward finding a peaceful solution. The manner of this solution, and its rhetoric, chimed with Roosevelt's own. Consequently, this further drew together the US administration and the Catholic Church. Indeed, one of the primary reasons for FDR dispatching Myron Taylor to the Vatican was, as Roosevelt stated in

a letter to Pope Pius, "in order that our *parallel* endeavours for peace and the alleviation of sufferings might be assisted".<sup>69</sup> Another White House letter, written on October 11, 1940, substantiates this. "It is equally necessary," wrote Roosevelt, "to realise that peace as your Holiness conceives it must be based upon the re-establishment of Christian law and doctrine as the guiding principles which govern the relations of free men and free nations."<sup>70</sup> In other words, perhaps the American Catholic Church vigorously outmanoeuvred their rivals so as to win hegemony within the American establishment.

Moreover, as we have seen in this chapter, although the League of Decency was a Catholic organisation the values it promoted in this context were not strictly or uniquely Catholic in nature but were, more accurately, the values of the American establishment infused with a "Catholic flavour". In fact, despite its authorship the three main tenets of the Production Code itself make no overtly *specific* reference or concession to Catholic law or any supernatural belief upheld solely by Catholicism. As we have seen, its guiding principles, the so-called "Statements of the Code", were 1) "No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrong doing, evil or sin"; 2) "Correct standards of life subject only to the requirement of drama and entertainment shall be presented"; and 3) "Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation."<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the Production Code's prime directives sought to uphold what can be most accurately described as an American Morality. In other words, the Production Code and the organisations that upheld it promoted a set of values that any American religious group would have endorsed and, as we have seen, did. After all, the Production Code prohibited representations of murder and the glamorising of the criminal lifestyle. Moreover, it decreed as acceptable only the promotion of the laws and social contract already in existence. Protestants may therefore have been perfectly content with the direction taken in cultural production by the pre-existing institutions.

However, another factor may be that, according to many principal leaders of the American Catholic Church, Catholics, despite the

common assumption, understood the nature of America to a better extent than Protestants. That is to say, the subtle Catholic flavour injected into Americanism was not a fraudulent, conniving or conspiratorial (in the pejorative sense) act on the behalf of the American Catholic Church. Rather, so they would argue, their morality and secular American morality were already much the same code. Indeed, Wilfrid Parsons wrote that,

By a sort of natural affinity, the modern, intelligent Catholic finds himself drawing ever more closely to the American cultural origins at the same time as his fellow non-Catholic Americans are disavowing those origins with almost indecent haste.<sup>72</sup>

The contemporaneous writer Edward A. Purcell Jr. also argued that never having faced "the 'crisis of democratic theory' and having a ready justification for democracy" in natural law and a "ready justification for an entire system of morality in Thomist theology", Catholic thinkers "were much closer in their intellectual and emotional response to the great majority of Americans" in their acceptance of Americanism.<sup>73</sup> After all, the United States of America was not a democracy in the Athenian sense of the word. Moreover, with its negation of a genuine welfare state and therefore innate promotion of a highly stratified class system, its willingness to elevate to the pinnacle of said class structure those who exist outside of elected politics (the plutocratic) and its highly federalised system of governance, the US polity could well have been understood by American Catholic theologians to have incorporated elements of a system that we might describe as quasi-feudal and, which, ultimately, would be readily understood and appreciated by the Catholic thinker.

Whatever blending of, or interaction between, these notions, the American Catholic Church had allied itself with American culture and civilisation, taking up the means of communication applied vigorously by other secular American institutions. After all, in addition to the PCA, which it effectively controlled, and the Legion of Decency, there were 103 American Catholic dioceses which had newspapers.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the American Catholic Church operated a Catholic news

bureau in Washington DC. There was also the famous Catholic Hour radio show presented by the firebrand and politically involved Father Charles Coughlin. It also possessed national publications such as *The Ecclesiastical Review* aimed at priests and the more publicly intended *America*, the very title of which supports our assertion in this chapter. To fully appreciate the significance of their communications infrastructure let us compare the American Catholic position to that of the Protestant. As John Ferre has argued,

Gone were the days when Protestant press vied with secular publications to explain matters of political, economic, social, and religious importance. By the twentieth century most Protestant magazines had become either denominational house organs or speciality publications with narrow ecclesiastical readerships. The marginalisation of the Protestant press continued from 1900 to 1930, when the Protestant component of total magazine publication dropped by four fifths.<sup>75</sup>

At the start of this chapter we posed the question; did the American Catholic Church seek to promote the Divine Mysteries of the Sacraments in popular culture? We held that a negative answer to this question would suggest that the PCA did not embrace a Catholicised agenda and the Legion of Decency was little more than a mere pressure group, as the bulk of the historiography on this subject argues. A positive answer was thought to provide us with proof that during the long 1930s the American Catholic Church through its agencies including, to varying extents the Legion, the pulpit, printed media and the PCA, did attempt to robustly influence the social moral code of the day so as to incorporate Catholic doctrine. However, in the light of the evidence, we are compelled to reach a somewhat surprising conclusion. In the United States, religious institutions were depicted as sacred but they were not particularly promoted as either ancient or, and of crucial importance, independent groups. Rather, the public image of American Catholic groups was merged with the establishment's secular identity to create a distinctive American Morality.



In other words, via the PCA and the Legion of Decency, American Catholicism was reformulated so as to appear to be a simple, joyous faith which anyone could both comprehend and enter. American Catholicism was represented not as mysterious or supernatural but, rather, as practical and rooted in the contemporary world, specifically the American contemporary world. In fact, a quite overt and public transition was made from depictions of "classical", orthodox, European-style Catholic Mysteries, as promoted in *Song of Bernadette*, to overt and public representations of the superman, "good chap" priest. That is to say, screen priests such as *Going My Way*'s Father O'Malley, *Angels with Dirty Faces*' Father Connolly and *The Hurricane*'s Father Paul were portrayed as energetic, athletic, witty, urbane and two-fisted. Each was played by a devout Catholic, in a film the content of which had been overseen by a devout Catholic (Breen) and then censored by a confederation of devout Catholics (the Legion).

Such films advocated a skeletal form of Catholicism that would be understood as distinctly Catholic but easily compatible with Protestantism and, to a slightly lesser extent, Judaism. Moreover, the superman priest's actions and words sought not to engender the official doctrine of the Vatican into American hearts and minds but to protect and advocate American patriotism. The goal was to reshape the social moral code of the day so that to be Catholic was to be American and to be a patriotic American was to accept the institution of the American Catholic Church as a central feature of the US polity. This occurred partly due to the effectiveness of American Catholic institutions of cultural production but also because Protestant groups happily accepted the Catholic lead and because, arguably, the sentiment already existed in American culture, wherein high ranking Catholics had long appreciated a symbiotic connection between their faith and nation. Indeed, via the PCA and the League of Decency, the American Catholic Church helped to create the impression in popular culture of a "oneness" that would, so they hoped, lead to victory in the *kulturkampf*.

## CHAPTER 2

# SEXUALITY AND SENSUALITY

As we discussed in the introduction, the historiography is in general agreement that when the market mechanism dictates, cinematic depictions of titillating sexuality will feature prominently. Moreover, not only does Black place the combating of cinematic sex as central to the PCA and the Legion of Decency's agenda<sup>1</sup> but the Legion's own pledge required of the taker to "condemn absolutely those salacious motions pictures which, with other degrading agencies, are corrupting public morals and encouraging a sexmania in our land".<sup>2</sup> Therefore, if the American Catholic Church had no significant influence in the construction of Hollywood production, and thus the social moral code, we would expect the market to dictate that sex, to borrow a phrase, sells and, as such, green-light a veritable kaleidoscope of copulation in mainstream cinema. However, if the American Catholic Church did possess something approaching a dominating grip on cultural production would we not therefore expect the screen to be filled with representations of chastity, virginity and sexual innocence, if not sexual disinterest? To explore this theme, the chapter will be broadly divided into three sections. The first will discuss the representations of female sensuality, the next will examine portrayals of homosexuality and the final section will look at the depiction of religious figures and their relationship with the concept of sexuality and sensuality.

At first glance the common assumption seems to be accurate. The Catholic Church had long equated expressions of open sexuality as a sin and had even developed its own vocabulary to better describe such unbecoming behaviour. Homosexuality was known as "sexual degeneration", whereas masturbation was referred to by the somewhat baroque phrase, "to have touched oneself in an impure manner". Furthermore, pre-marital chastity was considered important for the salvation of the immortal soul and, as St Augustine argued, impure thoughts were as sinful as impure deeds. The pleasure of sex was entirely condemned and denied. Sex was encouraged merely as an act of procreation and, in the medieval calendar, permitted only on a handful of days per year. Indeed, as St Augustine wrote, "chastity in the married state is God's gift".<sup>3</sup> Finally, of course, sex for procreation was only encouraged amongst married couples and divorce was strictly forbidden.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the market-inspired paradigm of supply and demand, of "if the people want *insert as appropriate* [in our case, sex], show them *insert as appropriate* [in our case, sex]", also seems borne out. Before Joseph Breen was appointed director of the PCA, the position was held by James Wingate. A conservative by nature, Wingate was also, at least professionally, unaffiliated with any specific religious institution and known to be a defender of Hollywood's cultural production. In 1933, the Mae West comedy *I'm no Angel* was sent to the Hays Office for approval. West's comedies had a well publicised reputation for depictions of sexual liberty and risqué humour. Rather than chastising the producing studio for such scandalous content, Wingate wrote on September 18, 1933, that he "enjoyed the picture as a piece of entertainment".<sup>5</sup> In fact, he made no objections to the film's content. Wingate believed that the specific details of film were not of great significance so long as they were interpreted in the context of the whole picture. He understood *I'm no Angel* to be something of a burlesque comedy romp and as such quite harmless. In short, he encouraged dramatic license, held a position of relative permissiveness and thought that such films were what the public wanted.<sup>6</sup>

The American Catholic Church took entirely the contrary position. When Daniel Lord saw the 1931 Mae West film, *She Done Him Wrong*, which had employed the same formula as *I'm no Angel*, he called it a film

about "degenerates" and in a further merger of American patriotism and the American Catholic Church called for Hollywood to make films about "business, industry and commerce" instead.<sup>7</sup> Not yet having the Legion or the PCA to call upon, Lord instructed American Catholics to boycott the film. In 1933, at the Bishops Annual Conference in Washington DC, Lord listed 133 films, released in a six-month period that contained, so he argued, 26 episodes built on illicit love (sex out of wedlock), 13 where seductions had been accomplished, 12 where they had been planned and attempted, two depictions of rape, one of incest, 18 characters living in adultery, seven characters planning to commit the sin, three prostitutes as central characters and 25 films that presented "scenes and situations and dances and dialogues of indecent or obscene or anti-moral character".<sup>8</sup> Lord did not provide any insight into the manner of his research and the collation of this evidence and so it remains unknown whether these numbers were prepared for him by a team of ecclesiastical cinema "sexperts" or by himself, presumably after innumerable hours of attending private vestry screenings. Nevertheless, the result is clear: in the year before the creation of the Legion of Decency, the Hays Office and Hollywood more broadly seemed perfectly content to produce films in which sexuality and sensuality were the central themes whilst the American Catholic Church seemingly wanted all screen representations of sex to cease.

In the light of the subsequent formation of the Legion and the ferocity with which Lord, Quigley and others went about their task, it can be of little surprise that Wingate was replaced with Joseph Breen, the Catholic mole in Hollywood. Initially, one would assume that Breen subscribed to Lord's argument that sexuality and sensuality should be removed from the cinema. Indeed, in a letter to Martin Quigley on May 1, 1932, Breen had lambasted America's hitherto secular cultural producers stating in no uncertain terms that, "They'd put fucking in Macy's window, if you gave them half a chance, and they'd argue till they were blue in the face that it was art."<sup>9</sup>

However, in practice Breen and the Legion did not entirely forbid the representation of "degenerates" or sexuality. As Lea Jacobs pointed out, "After 1934 [with the Legion of Decency and Breen's watchful eye] the treatment of potentially offensive action [sexuality and sensuality]

shifted in the direction of greater ambiguity. While seduction, adultery or illicit sexuality were not forbidden as topics, it became much more difficult to call attention to such ideas even through nonverbal aspects of the scene. As a result, in many cases such as that of *Camille*, it is difficult for the spectator to pinpoint with certainty, when or how the heroine's sexual transgressions occur."<sup>10</sup> According to Jacobs, the American Catholic Church saw to it that explicit depictions of offensive sexuality and sensuality were kept off screen and not directly referred to. However, she ascribes this policy a certain ambiguity. In actuality it was perfectly clear as to why Breen and the Legion implemented such a rule. The depiction of prostitutes, adulterers and illicit sex was useful to the American Catholic Church as it provided them with exemplars of immoral behaviour. It was this that fuelled the very purpose of Breen's "compensating moral values" paradigm. In other words, gratuitous sexuality and sensuality should not be depicted or spoken of on screen lest it excite or provoke the viewer. However, so long as the immoral, wanton individual was suitably punished, the dramatic use of sexuality and sensuality would serve a significant educational purpose for the American Catholic Church.

As a result, the content of films would be shaped so as to ensure the ultimate victory of the compensating moral values which were, of course, predominately American Catholic virtues. Breen made this quite clear in his appraisal of the 1934 film, *Ecstasy*. "It is a story of illicit love and frustrated sex, treated in detail and without sufficient compensating moral values, the portrayal of the mare in heat, and of a rearing stallion, the actual scene in the cabin when the woman's face registers the varying emotions of the sexual act – all are designed to stimulate the lower and baser elements and are suggestive, lustful and obscene."<sup>11</sup> Breen's ire was particularly aroused by a scene in which the lead actress Hedy Lemarr swam naked in a pool, a sequence that was duly exorcised.<sup>12</sup> In the Legion of Decency's review catalogue several pictures with varying themes of sexuality and sensuality were refused an A-1 or A-2 classification for the stated reason that the film "does not include any compensating moral value", including *Chinese Den* (1940), *Lady in Distress* (1941), and *Girl from Maxim* (1941).<sup>13</sup> To ensure the thorough implementation of these compensating moral values,

Breen's PCA office would critique the proposed film's script before it went into production and then the Legion's reviewers, Looram's Ladies, would engage in an intensive appraisal of the final product. In its first year, 1934, Breen's staff offered over 27,000 "opinions" regarding the content of any given film and its employment of compensating moral values.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, to become one of Looram's Ladies a potential employee had to be a Catholic woman in her 20s. The candidate was then tutored for six months by a veteran reviewer. One of the examinations a candidate was required to take involved reviewing a film and then offering an opinion to justify the Legion's rating taken in isolation from her colleagues. It was, in its purest form, American Catholic culture school. To ensure the sanctity and consistency of the review process and to protect the youthful female reviewers from themselves being seduced and corrupted by the films they were subjected to, the reviewer would be compelled to read sobering literature such as the American Catholic review manuals, *How to Judge the Morality of Motion Pictures* and *A Popular Guide to Right Standards in Motion Picture Entertainment*. Its pages warned readers that as women they were the "weaker sex" and were more likely to be stirred by the emotions of a film. On the topic of screen representations of partial nudity the text read that, "The Legion recognises the serious moral danger to those seeing it exposed... under attractive circumstances."<sup>15</sup>

The document also instructed reviewers how to Catholically appraise the screen's depiction of emotional sympathy for moral sins. The text presented readers with two opposing film plots, Picture A and Picture B. The former was described as a "love triangle".

It is entirely devoid of salacious details but it proposes the doctrine that when a man's wife is selfish and unsympathetic, he is entirely justified in turning to another woman for love and happiness. In short, the film condones and justifies adultery. It does this not by ethical arguments but by emotional appeal. Deeply stirred by the picture, many of those witnessing it are apt to sympathise with the hero, approve his conduct and thus change their former convictions. Thus may we be led to believe that

under certain circumstances adultery is excusable. This is a false moral standard, wholly at variance with traditional belief.

Picture B centred on a "young romance". "Because of some circumstances," the guide wrote, perhaps "parental objections, let us say, or lack of money – the hero and heroine are forced to postpone marriage indefinitely.

They are young and persuaded that they cannot live without each other, they refuse to await marriage. Here is a film which by its sympathetic treatment presents most speciously the doctrine that sex experience is but the culmination of true love. It preaches that true lovers would be fools to defer it until marriage, and that pre-marital relations in such cases are pardonable. Because the hero's attractive and the heroine beautiful, the audience is inclined to sympathise with them and even approve what they do. It may be persuaded that deep and tender love excuses sin. Here, again, is a false moral standard, wholly at variance with traditional morality.<sup>16</sup>

So armed with Breen's compensating moral values and bolstered by the well-schooled Looram's Ladies, the American Catholic Church set about shaping Hollywood cultural product so as to present exemplars of pro-Catholic sexual virtues, who would be rewarded, and models of the American Catholic Church's interpretation of sinfulness (particularly sexual sinfulness), who would be suitably punished.

One major theme for which these tactics were employed was that of female sexual independence. What today we might label as the "modern woman" was, in the eyes of Breen and the Legion of Decency, a fallen, Eve-like figure of no morals, whose "liberty" or independence was a corrosive influence capable of melting so called traditional morality. As Lugowski points out "modern woman" was threatening to "usurp male privilege", which could not be countenanced.<sup>17</sup> An excellent example, as noted above, was the 1934 Mae West film, *She Done Him Wrong*. In the film, West played a carefree commitment-shy young woman who used her sexuality for the pursuit of physical pleasure. In

fact, she argues that her philosophy and seduction techniques are those employed by philandering men, who seemingly win praise and admiration for their conquests whereas she is the victim of scorn. "Men are alike," West says, "married or single, it's their game. I'm smart enough to play it their way." Her libidinousness even leads her to attempt the seduction of Cary Grant's missionary (even though he is actually a federal agent in disguise). "You can be had," she provocatively asserts. At one point a bewildered Grant asks, "Haven't you ever met a man who could make you happy?" to which West responds with the *double entendre*, "Sure, lots of times." As a result of Breen and the Legion's new policy, Mae West films of this nature became an endangered species. In fact, West's later outings were demonstrably tamer. More importantly though, there started a wave of motion pictures in which the West-type of independent, sexually liberated woman was depicted as losing her charms and riches so as to end the film beaten and often destitute. After all, in the *kulturkampf* of the long 1930s modernity had to be supplicated to tradition.

A good example was the film *Baby Face* (1934) in which the heroine used her sexual wiles to climb the social ladder. The heroine, Lilly, begins the film as a basement speakeasy barmaid. She uses her beauty and feminine charms to literally climb each floor of the social ladder, using a series of decent men each more economically successful, until she reaches the penthouse apartment of her latest lover, situated at the top of a New York skyscraper. However, in the final scene she is compelled to abandon her wanton life and loses her wealth and reputation in one fell swoop. *Baby Face's* compensating moral value was that a sexually aggressive gold-digger must be punished by the men she has abused.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the PCA and the Legion considered this unfettered humiliation of a desperate woman to be a "happy ending".<sup>19</sup> As Jacobs rightly argues, screen women of the long 1930s were often punished with mortification and death if they attempted an independent life.<sup>20</sup> This was evidently pointed out in the film's tag-line which read, "She climbed the ladder of success: wrong by wrong!"

This was a theme of particular sensitivity to the American Catholic Church. Therefore, even before the creation of the Legion and Breen's appointment, the pro-Catholic (and Catholic-authored) Production



Code sought to represent independent women as corruptive Eve-figures. Such was the case in MGM's *The Easiest Way* (1931). The film portrays the Madame Bovary-esque character of Laura, an actress, her relationship with John, the hard-working but poor man she loves, and Brock, the sugar daddy who keeps her. Jason Joy noted that the problem with the original script was Laura's "weakness of character". "The principal trouble with the adaptation," he wrote to the producers, "is that it builds up an audience sympathy for Laura Murdock and supplies her with the means of securing sympathetic excuses for, if not actual approval of her weakness of character."<sup>21</sup>

The Hays Office interpretation of the Production Code, in short, did not think that Laura was suitably punished for having two lovers, one of which she remained with only for economic security. However, the Hays Office resolved the issue, which they revealed to the producer Irving Thalberg in a letter written on November 10, 1930. "Could you not," the censors suggested, "by a series of lap dissolves from the final scene indicated by the adaptation, show Laura in successive steps on her way to the gutter?"<sup>22</sup> This is precisely what the writers included in a new version of the script that was submitted to the Hays Office for approval the very next day. "She follows," the revised script reads, "the course of many and from a mistress becomes a courtesan, and then a prostitute and then a whore."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the American Catholic Church and the Hays Office agreed wholeheartedly with the producers, when the revised script revealed the "truth", that "A girl may feel justified in thinking that the 'easiest way' is her only escape, she will find out that it does not pay and that she has traded her chances for lasting happiness and real love for temporary and quickly vanishing material comfort."<sup>24</sup>

The PCA and the Legion clearly sought to promote the destitution and humiliation of independent, or indeed desperate, women as a legitimate compensating moral value during the long 1930s. Such representations were the cinematic equivalent of a priest from the pulpit bellowing "take heed sinners". That the American Catholic Church should promote this theme and that it should be so embraced by the establishment should, of course, not be a total surprise. After all, Catholicism, in any variation, was deeply patriarchal and had for

centuries considered women, especially those who had reached the age of menstruation as either sinful or something akin to viral carriers of sin. According to Thomas Aquinas women were in fact "the daughters of sin".<sup>25</sup> Indeed, so traditional Catholicism argues, women were responsible for the expulsion of man from the Garden of Eden and are strictly forbidden to enter the priesthood. Only the Virgin Mary is consistently celebrated by practitioners of the Catholic faith and Bernini's sculpture *The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa* (completed in 1652) which depicts Theresa in an apparent state of sexual orgasm as she is faced with an angel, remains a controversial matter for many Catholics to this day. What should also not be overlooked is the fact that American Catholic cultural producers were not simply attempting to further entrench traditionalism. The Great Depression caused unimaginable destitution. For many women of the era prostitution was, to varying degrees, the last economic recourse. The American Catholic Church did not use cinema to attempt to present alternative options for women. Consequently, by trying only to re-penetrate traditional codes of behaviour into popular culture the American Catholic Church effectively abandoned destitute women to their fate.

A theme closely related to the subjugation of female independence (or modernity) was the advancement of another element of traditional Catholic philosophy, and one moreover that did not exist to the same extent in the tenets of other religious institutions in the US: pre-marital sex as sin. One example of the promotion of this theme was the film, *Yes, My Darling Daughter* (1938). In the story a young woman, Ellen, wants to have a "pretend" or trial marriage for a weekend with her fiancé, who is about to go to Europe for two years. She desires to have the "marriage experience" so that the couple will believe that they are truly married, in essence and principle, during their period of separation. The Legion's reviewers objected to the film arguing that, "the daughter's attitude towards the convention which forbids unmarried couples to spend an unchaperoned weekend together was generalised to include all adherence to convention as 'hypocrisy' and 'narrowmindedness'."<sup>26</sup>

The film's seeming promotion of the marriage convention as hypocritical was further underscored in the Legion's myriad other reviews.

Ten reviewers objected to the indignant line delivered by the daughter to the mother, who was naturally against the "weekend marriage": "Don't be a hypocrite. It's too late in the day for you to take a moral stand. It's none of your business what I'm doing." In fact, the Legion's reviewers argued that it undoubtedly was the mother's business and that the daughter should adhere to both her mother's advice and traditional principles. As the above reaction suggests, another theme raised by the Legion's reviewers was that of chaperonage. The Consulter's Report objected to the movie's flippancy towards chaperonage and stated that, "chaperonage is a convention of society for the safeguard of morals, not only to frustrate deliberate intentions of wrong-doing, but more particularly to protect the young against those circumstances which might lead to unpremeditated violation of morals."<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, the reviewers' comments overtly promoted, and sought the further representation in popular culture of, several features of Catholic philosophy not necessarily shared by other American religious institutions. Most obviously, the use of the word "unpremeditated" in relation to the violation of moral law can be understood as a preachment of Catholic original sin (and not merely unplanned actions), which argued that, in the words of Aquinas, "the child, shackled with original sin, is born of fleshly concupiscence".<sup>28</sup> The reviewers were suggesting that not all "degenerate" behaviour was necessarily a conscious or deliberate act but rather a submission to the evil latent inside all human beings. As such, the promotion of chaperonage as a theme they wished to see explored in cinema was an attempt to engender among the American public an appreciation of and acceptance for original sin.

Moreover, the above extracts clearly reveal a favourable attitude on behalf of the American Catholic Church towards representations of parental authority. Though this is not a uniquely Catholic principle it remains one steadfastly central to the structure of that religion. Umberto Eco has mused fascinatingly on the notion that the biblical commandment, "Thou shall obey thy father and mother", which ostensibly appears as an ode to parental authority, is in fact a barely coded instruction to honour traditional authority figures and institutions in

general. In his historical novel, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*, Eco has an old and embattled enemy of religion, Gragnola, explain to a young boy,

Honour thy father and mother. O hush, don't tell me it's good for children to obey their parents, that's fine for children, who need guidance. But honour thy father and mother means respect the ideas of your elders, don't oppose tradition, don't presume to change the tribe's way of life. See?<sup>29</sup>

If we accept Eco's translation of this commandment and apply it to our thesis here, we could then interpret the American Catholic Church's position regarding the film *Yes, My Darling Daughter* as one that sought the promotion of parental authority as a form of advocating institutionalised authority. As the American Catholic Church, as discussed in chapter one, was engaged in a process of merging the public identity of Americanism and patriotism with American Catholicism, we can therefore see that the Church would understand the daughter's defiance of her mother as a defiance of the American Catholic Church. Consequently, the film was denied either an A-1 or A-2 rating, even though the producers readily agreed to alter the film so as to clearly show the "married couple" sleeping in separate beds.

Another representative example was the 1938 film, *The Sisters*. The film revolved around a trio of sisters from Montana who attend the inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt in 1905. There they each meet a man that they will marry and thus embark on three radically different life trajectories. On May 27, 1938, Joseph Breen wrote to Jack Warner, the film's producer. In his letter, he spelt out in no uncertain terms his dissatisfaction with the portrayal of pre-marital sex. "It is our understanding," Breen wrote, "that all this material will be rewritten to delete all comedy flavour having to do with the subject of sex, and as much of the detail as possible, that an effort will be made to treat the subject more subtly, and to introduce definite compensating moral values in which the subject of illicit sex relationships, in every case, will be definitely and vigorously condemned."<sup>30</sup>

Evidently, Warner complied in full with Breen's many requests. On June 15, 1938, Breen once more wrote to the producer in which he stated, "We note the changes made and we are happy to advise that this material seems to us to be basically satisfactory from the standpoint of the Production Code."<sup>31</sup> This represented a significant change in tenor. In the space of less than one month the film's script had shifted from being condemned to accepted. When one examines the changes made to the treatment, one immediately understands why. The alterations included, "page 129 -et seq: These scenes which characterise Flora's mother as a 'Madame' and her establishment as a house of prostitution, the showing of the girls in negligees, all the action, dialogue and details suggesting that this is a house of prostitution... [and] The showing of men and the sounds of their voices, which bring out such suggestions." Not only were these changes made but the "house of prostitution" became an eminently more benign "boarding house".<sup>32</sup>

The promotion of this theme extended as far as rewriting the original script so as to legitimise on-screen relationships in such cases where it was impossible to remove sexuality from the film's story and action. One such example was the screen adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's, *A Farewell to Arms* (1932). In the original novel, the protagonist, a hospitalised World War I soldier, becomes embroiled in an affair with his nurse. She later becomes pregnant though tragedy strikes during the birth which neither she nor the infant survive. Naturally, such action was considered too dangerous and immoral to represent on the screen during a time of "war" as it would arguably create public division, or certainly discourse, and not the desired "oneness". Therefore, the story was changed so as to include a scene that featured a decidedly Catholic priest murmuring a marriage service behind the hospital bed of Gary Cooper, who played the lead role.<sup>33</sup> Another example was the 1932 gangster film *Scarface* in which the PCA required the script to be rewritten so as to include a secret wedding between the lead character's sister and best friend, so as to legitimise their relationship, before it could be approved for production.<sup>34</sup>

Naturally, the theme of pre-marital sex as sin was featured almost interchangeably with the promotion of another element of specifically Catholic doctrine, that of marriage as sacred. In the Legion of

Decency's catalogue of motion picture classifications several films were refused A-1 or A-2 ratings due to their employment of a "light treatment of marriage", including *He Married His Wife* (1939), *Great Profile* (1939) and *Happy Go Lucky* (1942).<sup>35</sup> Moreover, *Accent on Love* (1940) and *Adventure* (1945) were both classified "B" for reflecting "the acceptability of divorce".<sup>36</sup> However, as we have already seen, the American Catholic Church did not reduce itself to passively classifying screen content; it sought to actively shape it. This even extended to the liberal rewriting of history. Alexander Korda's 1941 film, *That Hamilton Woman* was one instance. Despite its portrayal of the historical romance between Admiral Lord Nelson and Emma Hamilton, and Korda's insistence that his representation was accurate, Breen responded, "I don't care who they are, they're adulterers".<sup>37</sup> Indeed, an extra scene had to be added as a prelude depicting Emma Hamilton as destitute in France. She is mocked as someone who "used to be a lady". Hamilton then falls into a reverie and the film starts proper. This prelude was clearly added to show just retribution for adultery at American rather than British insistence and is arguably the most transparent example of the theme under discussion. Nor were Nobel Prize-winning novels safe, as was the case with the 1934 film version of *Ann Vickers*. Breen wrote to the producer Merian Cooper arguing of the script that he had not "read anything quite so vulgarly offensive", and went on to add that "illicit sex relationships [are] never justified".<sup>38</sup>

One of the best examples of this theme's development was the screen version of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1936), which both Breen and the Legion transformed into a magnificent piece of pro-American Catholic propaganda. The novel portrayed the doomed Anna as imprisoned in a loveless marriage to a cold, insensitive bore. She meets the dashing Vronsky with whom she embarks on a torrid affair, abandoning her husband and son. Soon Anna falls pregnant with Vronsky's child but it proves too little to save their relationship, as the fickle charmer has already become tired and restless. He joins the Russian war effort and when Anna attempts to confront him at the train station she spies him wishing goodbye to his mother and the beautiful Princess Serokina. Utterly heartbroken and beaten, Anna commits suicide by throwing herself in front of a locomotive.

Naturally, the story presented certain problems to the Catholic censors. Breen wrote of the planned production to Will Hays. In an analysis consistent with that adopted by Looram's *Ladies*, he commented that, "Undue sympathy for the sinner is liable by association of ideas and momentum of emotion to lead to sympathy with the sin [of adultery] itself. Moreover, excessive sympathy for the sinner creates antipathy for the good characters... Exaggerated sympathy for the adulterous wife may make us hate the faithful husband."<sup>39</sup> However, paying little mind to the themes and content of the original novel, the adaptation of *Anna Karenina* became the essential model for applying compensating moral values to those who break the sanctity of marriage. Firstly, the PCA insisted that the child born out of wedlock be removed from the script, which it swiftly was. Secondly, when Anna finally succumbs to the advances of Vronsky, she is depicted not in a bed or any other state of post-coitus but rather fully dressed and sitting in a chair. Breen was instrumental in the formulation of this scene. On March 5, 1935, he wrote to producer David Selznick commenting that, "the use of a sofa in this scene is advisable. The scene as a whole should be toned down, to avoid the present suggestion of a previous passionate episode between them. The following lines should be deleted or changed: 'I have nobody in the world but you now dear, remember that!'"<sup>40</sup>

More than simply presenting "acceptable" behaviour on screen, the film fully embraced the concept of compensating moral values. Indeed, Anna's punishment as an adulteress was not tacked on the end of the film, as was the case with *Baby Face*, but was rather incorporated throughout the entire narrative. Of the completed picture, Breen wrote triumphantly to Hays claiming that, "The impression of [Anna's] wrongfulness is continuous and becomes complete at the climax... There is not a single hour of unalloyed bliss for Anna."<sup>41</sup> Breen had sought the heroine's "denunciation and decline" and that is exactly what the final product delivered.<sup>42</sup> Anna's affair is publicly condemned in a scene where she is cruelly snubbed at the opera and at a croquet match, and moreover, she is continuously gossiped about as a weak and sinful woman. Thrice she is referred to as "doomed", once by her lover and twice by herself as she reflects firstly, "I know now

there is no hope for me" and then also in the following exchange with Vronsky.

Anna: I feel pain, I feel tears.

Vronsky: Why?

Anna: Because I am so happy. Not to think, not to believe, only to feel... We'll be punished.

Vronsky: Punished?

Anna: For being so happy.

However, the crowning achievement for the American Catholic Church in regards to the picture was its successful attempt to transform Anna's husband, Karenin, from the novel's inadvertent oppressor into the film's overt moral guardian. Throughout the film he is presented as a patient, thoughtful, decent man abused by his sinful wife. He is also given two separate speeches in which he advocates "the inviolability of the marriage tie" and demonstrates that he is prepared to forgive the treacherous Anna in order to maintain their familial bond. "The family," he calmly states to his errant wife, "cannot be broken up by the whim or caprice or even the sin of one of the partners in marriage." The film was ultimately considered by the PCA to be "thoroughly and completely acceptable under the provisions of our production code".<sup>43</sup> Moreover, this example reveals with clarity how the American Catholic Church encouraged the "correct" portrayal of sexuality and sensuality so as to provide audiences with an exemplar of rotten, immoral behaviour and to demonstrate the inevitable outcome of engaging in such activities: misery, humiliation, death and damnation.

It was not simply the representation of adultery that interested the American Catholic Church regarding the theme of marriage as sacred. They were also keen to ensure that audiences were made aware of the consummation of screen marriages. It was considered important that the marriage be represented as healthy and not overwhelmingly stifling. Therefore, sex itself was occasionally depicted as positive so that the institution of marriage appeared as rewarding, natural and legitimate. One example was the 1939 film, *This Thing Called Love*. The story finds the wife of a recently married couple



request from her husband only a platonic relationship. She wants to live with her husband but, in a manner of speaking, only as friends so as to learn if they are truly compatible. As a result of his forced abstinence the husband begins to woo his attractive secretary putting a great strain on the marriage. Eventually, the couple are reconciled and the marriage is finally consummated. Father McClafferty, the executive secretary of the Legion of Decency, wanted to condemn the film because of its depiction of an unconsummated marriage and because the wife only gives herself to her husband because she is afraid of losing him to another woman and not, importantly, because she recognised that her peculiar, un-Catholic actions, in demanding the platonic relationship in the first place, were morally incorrect. Consequently, on February 5, 1939, the Legion awarded the film with a ruinous "C" classification. This compelled the producing studio, which had hitherto been reluctant to affect any change to the story, into action. The film was re-edited within a week so as to alter the theme somewhat away from consummation. The revised version, which seemed to focus more on the husband's valiant efforts to resist the temptation of his Eve-like secretary, was certified as a "B" by the Legion.<sup>44</sup>

A similar fate awaited the 1941 Greta Garbo film, *Two Faced Woman*. In the plot, Garbo pretends to be her own twin sister so that she can seduce her husband who has grown bored and distant in recent times. The film was immediately condemned by the Legion of Decency. As a result the studio was compelled to reshoot the film so as to depict the husband, Melvyn Douglas, realising at the last moment that Garbo's seductress was in fact his own wife. Though the Legion were not ecstatic about this film, and indeed awarded it a "B" rating, they did hold that in its revised form the film had been morally improved. The difference was small but significant: by knowing that Garbo was his wife when he bedded her, Douglas was not committing adultery.

The American Catholic Church understood the depiction of the inviolability of marriage as a crucial battleground in the *kulturkampf*. The perceived necessity to promote this cinematic trend had not gone unnoticed amongst the nation's reviewers. In one article concerning *Two Faced Woman* the author wrote that, "for the last half dozen

years, Hollywood has been having a high old time honeymooning. I mean, that with a marriage license, however technical and fictitious, anything goes. We have had a succession of sizzling bedroom sequences that are nearly as wanton as if the dalliance were without the benefit of clergy... I reluctantly agree with the Legion of Decency; marriage in a good many films is represented as a one-woman harem and a knowing, smirky quality has been too evident."<sup>45</sup>

It may appear as if the American Catholic Church was relatively happy to allow screen depictions of what it considered to be sinful or degenerate behaviour so long as there were sufficient compensating moral values. However, there remained themes which the PCA, under Breen, and the Legion simply wanted to eradicate from popular culture. One of the most prominent was that of prostitution. During the silent era prostitution was, in American cinema, a problematic theme for filmmakers to shoot without descending into farce. However, the advent of sound allowed characters to rationalise their actions verbally, which allowed for the potential treatment of more socially conscious topics in cinema. For example, Greta Garbo, during the silent era, mostly played sophisticates but in her first sound film, *Anna Christie* (1930), she played an alcoholic prostitute. This development in sound technology had thoroughly perturbed the American Catholic Church. Indeed, in August 1930, the pre-Breen Hays Office commented upon the script for the proposed film, *Cimarron*. The official reply discussed in length a segment of the story in which the hero Yancey, a preacher/lawyer, convinces a jury not to convict Dixie Lee, the prostitute, because she is a victim of circumstances. "Yancey believes that everyone has the right to live and be free, but this may be objected to by the censors."<sup>46</sup> This was certainly the case and from Breen's appointment, and the inception of the Legion of Decency, a considered effort was made to expunge from cinema representations of prostitution.

On August 31, 1935, Joseph Breen wrote to Will Hays concerning the film *Barbary Coast*. In his text, Breen celebrates his success at reformulating the picture. "I turned a film about prostitutes," he writes, "into a film with no sex about a fine, clean girl." All in all, the finished film contained "no unpleasant detail of prostitution."<sup>47</sup> Breen and the PCA attempted to "clean" other such projects, including the 1936 film,

*Private Number*. The heroine's slump from decency follows her visit to a "gambling house", where she is subsequently arrested by the police on a "morals" charge. Breen objected to almost every element of the scenario. "The house is operated by Grandma Gammoll," he wrote to producer Darryl Zanuck, "a lady suggestive of an elderly Madame. There is the trim coloured maid who looks through a peep hole before opening the door. Cokely's winking at the maid, the drinking of champagne in a private parlour and the painting of a voluptuous lady in a harem. All tend, in our judgment, to give this house the colour and flavour of a house of ill fame"<sup>48</sup> and should be changed significantly or deleted entirely from the script before the film can be approved.<sup>49</sup>

Representations of prostitution were not the only elements of sexuality and sensuality that the PCA, the Legion and the American Catholic Church more broadly wished to remove entirely from popular culture. Perhaps considered most dangerous to the preservation of American Catholicism, and thus another front in the *kulturkampf*, was the depiction of abortion. One such case concerned the details of the 1934 MGM film, *Men in White*, the story of which centred on a relationship of illicit love and the subsequent pregnancy of the woman involved. The film's hero, Clark Gable, plays an important and highly dedicated doctor who finds himself married to a social climber who cannot understand his commitment to his profession. Consequently, he finds himself embroiled in an affair with a nurse who admires his zeal and dedication. However, the nurse's life begins to fall apart when she discovers that she is pregnant with the doctor's child. In a memo for the file written on January 24, 1934, Jason Joy asserted that, "I told them [MGM] quite frankly and positively that if the MGM picture even suggested abortion and I had anything to say about it, it would be condemned."<sup>50</sup>

The producers heeded the suggestions of Joy and quickly redeveloped the story so that instead of having an abortion the heroine decides that a termination would be, unequivocally, the wrong decision to make. On March 20, 1934, Will Hays wrote that, now "it is a strong picture, probably leaving a strong impression against abortion subjectively and objectively."<sup>51</sup> However, the film still discussed the matter and that alone was unacceptable to the American Catholic Church. In

a letter to Francis Harman written on December 31, 1937, Breen made their position abundantly clear.

The policy of the PCA has been at all times not to allow any suggestion of abortion, or even any discussion with regard to it.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, the Production Code document, which guided first the Hays Office (or Studio Relations Committee) and then the PCA, strictly forbade its representation on screen. Consequently, Will Hays attempted to convince the producers of *Men in White* to reshape the script further still. "The word 'peritonic' should go out," he told the studio, "because that word indicates very definitely that there must have been a previous operation [an abortion]. That is technically and scientifically so true that it will be just the thing which the overcritical could use to insist that that means there has been an abortion necessary by influence."<sup>53</sup>

So disconcerted were the PCA with the subject of abortion that Hays later instructed the producers to, effectively, change the entire plot of the film. In a letter to J. Robert Rubin written on January 4, 1935, Hays outlined the decision of the censors.

A long session was had on the 28th between Messrs Manix, Pelton, and Bell with Mr Breen and they agreed to eliminate the definite suggestion of abortion. The cause of the girl's illness in the picture will have to be guessed at... It is believed that ninety five percent of the audience who see the picture will have to guess at what causes the tragedy. Some will think that she tries to commit suicide, the others — none can tell.<sup>54</sup>

It is of interest to note that as it appears that in the hierarchy of American Catholic sins, suicide ranked considerably under abortion. Perhaps, as far as screen representations were concerned, suicide was considered a compensating moral value for those individuals, primarily women, who had led unrepentant sinner's lives. In any case, it serves to underscore the point that the American Catholic Church was determined to eradicate depictions or suggestions of abortion and, in the example above, even the very existence of it as an intellectual concept.

As such, despite the studio's cooperation and implementation of all of the PCA's "suggestions", the Legion still condemned the film.

Exactly the same action was taken with the 1935 film, *Doctor Monica*. In the story, Monica's friend Mary falls pregnant. Unbeknownst to Monica, the baby's father is her own husband. In the original concept Mary attempted to induce an abortion by engaging in a myriad of reckless behaviours, including heavy drinking and horse riding. However, the PCA were appalled by the content and set about actively reformulating the plot and its action. Indeed, the film's intended form was found reprehensible by Breen and, in February 1934, he made his thoughts exceedingly clear to producer Jack Warner. "We are compelled to classify [the three central female characters of Monica, Monica's best friend and Mary] as a lesbian, a nymphomaniac and a prostitute. I fail to see how an acceptable treatment could be evolved."<sup>55</sup>

However, an acceptable treatment was evolved. Breen insisted that the scenes of Mary's attempts to induce abortion be shown *before* the character learns of her condition, therefore nullifying the issue of abortion and, moreover, depicting Mary as an unsympathetically reckless individual. Moreover, cut from the film was any reference to abortion, and indeed, the conception of the baby. Such deletions included a bedroom *tete a tete* between Mary and Monica wherein the former pleads to be given an abortion:

Mary: You've got to help me!

Monica: Just what do you mean?

Mary: You know!

Monica: Don't you ever talk that way again. Don't you ever think that way again!

As with *Men in White*, the above extract suggests that the film was decidedly anti-abortion. However, the American Catholic Church was not interested in the condemning of abortion but, rather, sought actively to create a culture in which abortion simply did not exist as a concept. In other words, the PCA and the Legion sought to "deny" abortion.

This was further illustrated in another of Breen's cuts from the original film. "This action of Mary fainting at the piano," Breen explained

to Warner, "will very likely be interpreted by censor boards as an indication of her pregnancy... If this interpretation is given, it will probably be cut."<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in the finale Mary commits suicide and Monica, who is infertile, keeps the baby with her reconciled husband. Thus the compensating moral values became obvious: the "nymphomaniac" is punished with a form of death that will condemn her immortal soul, marriage remains inviolable and abortion simply does not exist either literally or conceptually. In fact, in September 1935, one mainstream reviewer, Edward Schwegter, wrote that, "The impression of abortion did not strike me too definitely: all I remember is a vague suggestion of something that might have been plus the feeling that something was missing or cut out."<sup>57</sup>

As with abortion, the American Catholic Church also wanted to abolish screen representations of nudity, especially among women. Not only did the PCA and the Legion find depictions of the naked female form scandalously indecent but they were also convinced that by permitting such depictions cinema would be encouraging actions among its patrons that would inextricably lead to the perpetuation of prostitution, adultery, female independence and subsequently abortion. In other words, permitting screen nudity would entrench, not remove or shape, pre-existing (or modern) representations of sexuality and sensuality and would therefore undermine the agenda of the American Catholic Church. This is why, of course, the original Production Code document also forbade depictions of nudity.

Perhaps the most representative example was in the film, *The Outlaw* (1941). The story was a loose retelling of the Billy the Kid legend in which he and Doc Holiday traded a woman, who they considered a piece of property less valuable than a horse. Breen objected less to the representation of a woman as property and more to the depiction of Jane Russell's cleavage. On March 28, 1941, he castigated the studio for the film's many shots "in which the breasts are not fully covered."<sup>58</sup> According to Black, Breen waged something of a war against breasts and, particularly, shots of women wearing angora sweaters, even writing to the studios to demand that they not clothe actresses in such garments. *Newsweek* commented on how

the sweater industry was outraged as they were exceedingly popular items at the time. Indeed, Breen and the PCA were forbidding the cinema to portray what was being worn by audiences watching the film, thus further underscoring the efforts of the American Catholic Church to affect what was occurring in the streets (or civilisation) via the cinema (or culture).<sup>59</sup>

Following the sweater episode, in 1941 Breen briefly resigned from the PCA claiming to be "punch drunk". He returned in 1942 because a suitable replacement could not be found. During the search for Breen's successor, Will Hays and the Legion both agreed that he should be a devout Catholic so that the *kulturkampf* could continue unabated. Breen meanwhile continued his part in the American Catholic Church's war on modernity by taking a job as a film producer for the studio, RKO. It was thought that Breen would be able to create pro-Catholic films as opposed to shaping those already conceived. He proved an unmitigated failure in this role and so American Catholic attempts to "become" an actual film studio faltered.<sup>60</sup> However, Breen, Hays, the PCA and the Legion remained committed to the campaign and so just months after resigning Breen returned to his desk as the director of the PCA.

Another example in which nudity was repressed was the 1937 educational documentary, *Birth of a Baby*. The film's remit was to inform cinematic audiences of the biology of childbirth and to provide advice to expectant mothers. The film depicted a realistic and detailed re-enactment of the process of childbirth. Though hardly explicit, the American Catholic Church was concerned that footage of childbirth presented as educational would only underscore in the minds of viewers the specifics of the female form. Archbishop McNicholas, speaking on behalf of the Legion of Decency, put it thusly, "the film is not suited to general exhibition in the theatre, where audiences are composed of both sexes and various ages, backgrounds, mentalities and temperaments".<sup>61</sup> In other words, the Legion believed that a realistic interpretation of childbirth would be just as provocative to men (who would want it) and women (who would want to be like it) as Jane Russell's cleavage. Indeed, according to Ruth Vasey, *Birth of a Baby* serves to underscore how the PCA and the Legion sought to create "innocent inhabitants of a

movie universe in which sexuality was so thoroughly identified with naïveté that one hardly occurred without the other".<sup>62</sup> Vasey is broadly correct, except that she omits an important point: the PCA and the Legion also worked to deliberately represent the knowing sexual sinner so long as she was properly and unambiguously punished for her actions, thoughts and plans.

It has become clear that when trying either to utilise screen depictions of sexuality and sensuality to provide an exemplar of a doomed "degenerate" or when attempting to remove entirely from iconography, language and thought abortion and nudity, the primary focus of the American Catholic Church's cultural producers has been women. Throughout the period in question women were depicted as untrustworthy and inconstant. They were harbingers of sin of which only stern adherence to patriarchal authority could combat. For these sins they were suitably punished on the screen. However, the theme of sexuality and sensuality can also be extended to men and, moreover, here too the American Catholic Church sought to remove entirely certain themes.

The most prominent was homosexuality.<sup>63</sup> In the traditional Catholic vernacular, homosexuality was known as "sexual degeneration". In many respects it was the most terrible sin a man could commit because it also entailed the corruption, either willing or otherwise, of another man. As such, homosexuality was understood through the prism of a domino theory. Consequently, the original Production Code, as written by Lord and Quigley, outright banned homosexuality from screen treatment, labelling it as a "sexual perversion".<sup>64</sup> As a result, the Production Code was not troubled with scripts, or the Legion with completed films, which discussed homosexuality to any significant extent, at least not openly, during the period in question (especially after 1934). However, American Catholic cultural producers, whilst keen not to endorse philandering, adultery or pre-marital sex, wanted the image of a man in popular culture to be that of a strong, breadwinning, virile man of action, much as they had with screen representations of the superman priest. Indeed, as with abortion, the American Catholic Church sought to remove the very concept of homosexuality from culture. As a result, pictures were flagged wherein the hero did not fit the above stated



model. This was made abundantly clear by the PCA's secretary Olga Martin who in 1937's *Hollywood's Movie Commandments* explained that, "No hint of sex perversion may be introduced into a screen story. The characterisation of a man as effeminate... would be absolutely forbidden for screen portrayal. This means, too, that no comedy character may be introduced into a screen play pantomiming a pervert."<sup>65</sup>

One example was the 1935 film, *The Flame Within*. On March 11, 1935, Breen wrote to producer Louis Mayer with the complaint, "Page 2: Omit the expression 'He's a little effeminate'. Also there should be no indication of effeminacy in the portrayal of Ramos."<sup>66</sup> The PCA pulled no punches in its attempt to rid the screen of this particular enemy. In April 1938, whilst shaping the film, *Boys' Town*, Breen again wrote to Mayer in which he argued that "There must be nothing suggestive of a pansy reaction in the line 'Peacock alley? Whoops!'"<sup>67</sup> It was a similar case for the 1936 film, *Follow the Fleet*, in which Fred Astaire and his navy comrades learnt to dance. In October 1935, Breen wrote to B.B. Kahane at the studio RKO stating that, "We are assuming of course that you will exercise your usual good taste in this scene of the sailors learning to dance. There will be no attempt to inject any 'pansy' humour into the scene."<sup>68</sup>

Olga Martin richly praised the PCA's attempts to shape this theme in her book, *Hollywood's Movie Commandments*. "It was only because of the PCA," she writes, "that the play *The Children's Hour* [for instance], with its implications of sex perversion, was recast into a natural love story. Many other examples could be mentioned."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, as late as 1953, we see this theme advocated. In a re-run of the 1930s gangster film *The Public Enemy* the PCA noted that, "It was still considered necessary to ask for certain deletions, two of which punched up unacceptable sex angles in the picture, and one which contained the portrayal of a pansy."<sup>70</sup> In fact, the only acknowledgment of homosexuality permitted in popular culture was that to describe Hitler's chief lieutenants as un-American monsters and this was only in the period immediately prior to the outbreak of World War II.<sup>71</sup>

Another theme of considerable interest to American Catholic cultural producers was the representation of sexuality and sensuality *vis a vis* religious figures. One particular element was to complement the

depiction of priests as virile fighters with a clear portrayal of them as completely desexualised, or at the very least thoroughly disinterested in sexuality. *Going My Way* provided a clear example of this. In the film's original treatment, Father O'Malley enjoyed a close friendship with his old acquaintance Jenny. The PCA wrote to the studio asking them to qualify the relationship.

Page 98: We would like to suggest that wherever you show Jenny in company with the priest, that she have a companion with her, another lady possibly, who could be established as Jenny's secretary or maid. It might be very well if she were never shown... associating with the priests unchaperoned.<sup>72</sup>

In August 1943, a certain Reverend Joseph T. McGucken DD, auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, wrote to Breen to voice concern, on behalf of a visiting delegation of Catholic dramatic arts teachers from Chicago, that the portrayal of priests in the film would contradict the vow of celibacy imposed by Catholic doctrine. On August 20, Breen responded in order to set the Bishop at ease. In his letter Breen wrote,

I note that the ladies inform you that running through the background of the picture is the vision of a love affair which the crooning priest is said to have experienced before he became a priest and which provides the inspiration for his various songs... In reply, will you please let me say that we have read an incomplete script of the Paramount production formerly known as *The Padre* [now *Going My Way*] in which Bing Crosby is to play the part of a priest who sings, but there is nothing in the script which we have seen which would support the worry which the dramatic teachers have.<sup>73</sup>

Breen went on to clarify that, "There is no suggestion that 'running through the background of the picture is the vision of a love affair'... There is no suggestion of any 'sex angle' in the picture... As I told you over the telephone this morning, Father Devlin and his assistant, are at work as technical advisors on this film, and I am certain that the finished picture will contain nothing that is offensive of this you may

be certain."<sup>74</sup> Given the veracity with which Breen and the PCA, not to mention the Legion, had set about their task of shaping popular culture one is compelled to take Breen at his word on this matter.

Furthermore, Breen went on to state that the PCA would remove any such suggestion of a priest engaging, or having once engaged, in a sexual relationship in any film produced by Hollywood. "Incidentally," he wrote, "the provisions of the Production Code do not permit any such treatment on the screen of Catholic priests. If a motion picture even remotely suggesting what is worrying your Chicago friends, were to come along here, it would not be approved."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, after the film's release, and as part of its promotion, Cardinal Villeneuve reviewed the film on national radio. His comments were reported by *Variety* on March 27, 1945. "The picture has been made," Villeneuve said, "with an apparent respect and there is nothing shocking in the behaviour of the modern priest as portrayed by Bing Crosby."<sup>76</sup>

Whenever priests were shown in the same milieu as sexuality and sensuality they did so only to shine a spiritual and redemptive light upon licentious and sinful behaviour. One such example was the 1937 film, *San Francisco*. The story depicts the bawdy, highly sexualised lifestyle to be found in San Francisco in the days immediately prior to the great earthquake of 1905. The action centres on Clark Gable's lustful gambler and the attempts of a patriarchal, but decidedly virile, "good chap" priest, played once again by Spencer Tracy, to clean up the city and rescue its inhabitants' souls. In a memo for the files written on February 6, 1936, the PCA noted with some satisfaction the film's theme of turn of the century San Francisco as a modern-day Sodom. "They [the producers] wanted to indicate that San Francisco was destroyed as a judgment from Heaven because of its licentiousness and immorality. It would therefore be necessary to spot scenes throughout the picture showing this immorality, in order to give point to the final scenes in the story. We agreed that it was our opinion that this might be done with careful handling. We advised them to avoid showing specific scenes having to do with sexual immortality such as prostitution, adultery, etc..."<sup>77</sup> Dialogue suggestive of blasphemy was also to be removed from the script; these deletions included the lines, "God forgive me", "Heaven forgive me" and the description of

the city as "the greatest set of human beings God ever rounded up in one spot".<sup>78</sup>

Tracy's character serves throughout the film as a paragon of quiet, strong virtue. Like a police constable, he walks a beat through the lust-soaked streets of the city without ever being drowned. It is through the prism of Tracy's actions and words that Gable's character understands the earthquake as a heavenly punishment and promptly renounces his carousing ways. The reviews of the film read as a litany of praise for the character of the heroic, incorruptible, and importantly, desexualised priest. "Tracy," wrote *Variety*, "plays the priest and it is the most difficult role in the picture. It was a daring piece of writing to begin with... Tracy makes him human and refreshing."<sup>79</sup> *Film Daily* agreed and on June 26, 1936, published the view that, "Tracy as Father Mullin interprets the character with a sincerity that is pleasing to see."<sup>80</sup> In 1941, the National Council of Catholic Women singled the film out for special praise in a resolution which thanked the work of American Catholic cultural producers more widely. "Whereas the motion picture industry has shown a deep and intelligent understanding of Catholic spirit and ideals," the resolution read, "whereas, this understanding has found expression in a true and most courteous portrayal of Catholic life, characters and personalities, in such pictures as *San Francisco*..."<sup>81</sup> These commentaries suggest cultural producers were advocating that the priest's celibacy was a natural and legitimate mode of behaviour and that only through maintaining this tradition, and celebrating tradition in general, could the US survive the assault of a rapacious modernity.<sup>82</sup>

Though it dates from before our period, and indeed before the PCA or the Legion of Decency, it is worth mentioning here the 1927 film, *King of Kings*. Cecile B. DeMille's film was the first significant production of the life of Jesus Christ. As was to become common practice during the long 1930s, the producers hired religious figures to serve as technical advisors. The most notable was the Legion's Daniel Lord. Of the film Lord wrote that it was, "one of the greatest efforts ever attempted in taking the birth, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus to the masses."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, from its conception the film was designed to be used, in the words of Jason Joy, as a "religious instrument".<sup>84</sup> DeMille even addressed the cast and crew proclaiming, "We intend that this film shall be a

religious lesson to America and the world. I want every man who drives a nail or mixes a hod of cement to do it in a religious spirit."<sup>85</sup> What makes the production relevant here is that it deviated from the often traditional representation of Mary Magdalena as a prostitute and instead fashioned her as a wide-eyed ingénue because, in the American religious paradigm, it would be decidedly unseemly for Jesus to be involved in an intimate relationship with a woman of dubious morality. Indeed, several American religious figures, including Lord and Reverend William E. Barton, were directly involved in the audition and casting process of Jacqueline Logan as Mary in order to ensure that an actress with an appropriately "innocent look" was placed in the role.<sup>86</sup>

In conclusion, the evidence pointedly suggests that in regards to the cinematic theme of sexuality and sensuality during the long 1930s more than the market mechanism was at work. However, neither can we assert that American Catholic cultural producers sought to depict solely chastity, virginity and sexual innocence in popular culture. Instead, the agencies of the American Catholic Church fought this particular battle in the *kulturkampf* with a fairly diverse and subtle range of weapons. What is quite apparent is that the primary focus of the PCA and the Legion of Decency was on the representation of *female* sexuality and sensuality. In short, women were often depicted as treacherous harpies. They were, as far as the cinema was concerned, the motor driving forward a convoy of sins including adultery, prostitution and pre-marital sex. However, rather than simply removing these themes from cinematic language and iconography and replacing them with a selection more chaste, the American Catholic Church introduced the concept of compensating moral values. In other words, Hollywood, within strictly defined limits, could depict female sexual independence, adultery and prostitution so long as those who engaged in said activities, or embraced them as concepts, were suitably and demonstrably punished. Appropriate sentences included destitution (e.g. *The Easiest Way*) and death (e.g. *Anna Karenina*, *Doctor Monica*). It was considered so much the better if the above punishments were suffered continuously so as to build the sentiment to a crescendo, as opposed to a revelation in the final scene (which would still suffice).

Of considerable interest is the discovery that suicide was often considered an appropriate punishment and as such a legitimate compensating moral value. In both *Anna Karenina* and *Doctor Monica*, to mention but two examples, the instigator of immoral behaviour committed suicide. This was a theme decidedly American in nature as international Catholicism held that any act of taking life was a mortal sin. It should not be thought that the American Catholic Church held a lesser opinion of suicide than, say, the Vatican but, rather, that in the case of the "fallen women" redemption was not an option. The PCA and the Legion wanted the public to be made aware that wanton behaviour would guarantee the damnation of the immortal soul.

However, there were still a good many themes which the American Catholic cultural producers attempted to erase entirely, not simply from the screen but also from intellectual conception. These themes again primarily concerned the actions of women. Abortion in film, whether by hint, suggestion, open discussion or otherwise could not be countenanced by either the PCA or the Legion. Unlike representations of female sexual independence, pre-marital sex and the dissolution of marriage, which could be to some extent discussed in order to demonstrate the evil of such activities, abortion was not to be mentioned even if to condemn it. As far as American Catholic cultural producers were concerned it simply did not exist. Though they did acknowledge the concept of nudity existed, the screen was forbidden to depict the female form not only naked, and in degrees thereof, but also in suggestive or provocative clothing (such as in the example of angora sweaters). So the American Catholic Church argued, nudity would lead to lust and lust would lead to pre-marital sex, adultery, prostitution and female sexual independence, all of which were considered grievous sins.

Efforts were not restricted solely to "correcting" the behaviour and thought of women alone. Other themes that "did not exist" as far as the American Catholic Church were concerned included homosexuality. Unlike prostitution, homosexuality was considered a sexual perversion the mere discussion of which would prove corrosive to popular culture. It was not the case that the American Catholic Church denied the existence of homosexuality nor that they wanted to instil into Marcuse's definition of culture the notion that it was bad. Rather,

they aimed, as with the concept of abortion, to simply erase it from consciousness. Presumably, these two themes were considered *persona non gratis*, as it were, because they cut to the core of Catholic belief in life. Abortion terminated life and the act of homosexuality negated procreation. However, once again, we are compelled to muse on the fact that suicide, which also took life, was acknowledged and used as a compensating moral value. It had a useful function within the weaponry of American Catholic cultural producers that the acknowledgment of abortion and homosexuality did not.

Finally, we have also seen that the representation of religious figures, specifically priests, and their relationship with sexuality and sensuality was dealt with in two separate but complementary manners. In the contemporary picture, priests were denied any association with sexuality either directly in their actions or via a third person. They simply existed serenely in the world of men but in a realm without sex. Historical representations of sexuality, such as the lasciviousness depicted in *San Francisco*, also portrayed the priest existing in a realm without sex. However, here, unlike for the contemporary priest, it was a personal realm: sexuality still existed all around the religious figure. This was permitted for only two reasons. Firstly, it showed, as we saw in chapter one, the innate strength of character of the heroic priest and secondly, it was used to create a defining moment, in one example the San Francisco earthquake, in which the wicked were punished and the good took the example of the priest and vowed henceforth to lead clean, virtuous Catholicised lives.

We can conclude then that during the long 1930s American Catholic cultural producers attempted to engender a distinctly Catholicised conceptualisation of sexuality and sensuality into the, ostensibly at least, secular popular culture. This was the inverse of the promotion of a simplified, arguably secularised, notion of the American Catholic Church in popular culture that we saw in chapter one. In other words, to further engender the desired illusion of "oneness", the American Catholic Church promoted its institution as American whilst simultaneously depicting American values as Catholic.

## CHAPTER 3

# WAR AND INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

If we can assert that the American Catholic Church, believing itself to be under siege, sought to prosecute a war against the forces of Godlessness it would be a fair assumption to expect the PCA and the Legion to encourage specific representations of this war and, presumably, American Catholic success in its waging. However, conventional wisdom would suggest a myriad of possibilities concerning the themes we may expect to discover. On the one hand, central to Catholicism is a pro-life philosophy that would understand human life as sacrosanct and its taking as deplorable. Suicide for example is a mortal sin in Catholic theology. We have already seen elements of this theme in the American Catholic Church's attitude towards cinematic depictions of abortion. Yet in that investigation we also discovered a slight contradiction. Whilst abortion was to be eliminated both literally and figuratively, suicide was often encouraged, or at least utilised, as a compensating moral value (despite as noted above it being a mortal sin). The theme of war further recommends itself for discussion because the current thinking, as established in the introduction, argues that Catholic censors were somewhat fixated with challenging and preventing representations of violence on the screen. Consequently, would it be accurate to expect American Catholic cultural producers to depict the religion's enemies as the takers of life and itself the preserver? The answer to this question is further complicated when we consider that



the Holy Crusades of the middle ages actively encouraged devout Catholics to slaughter as many infidels as could be managed, with each life taken bringing the crusader one step closer to his promised entry to heaven. Although the crusades belonged to an epoch of history which could hardly be labelled as contemporary, it was the DNA of such calls to arms which informed the development of the Jesuits who, in turn, influenced the philosophy of the American Catholic "crusade" under discussion. Indeed, there does exist in Catholic theology the concept of a "just war". In other words, war itself is not inherently evil.

In this chapter we shall examine the representation of war and international diplomacy through the unpacking of five related themes. Firstly, we shall discuss the depictions of priests in combat, or the fighting Father. We shall then look at how American Catholic cultural producers represented the nascent cold war with an enemy which they, arguably, interpreted as their greatest: communism. We will divide this theme into two sections. To begin with we shall discuss the fighting of international communism before examining the combating of domestic communism. To provide context to the themes under discussion we shall also investigate the American Catholic Church's position towards Nazism. This will be useful because conventional wisdom understands the Nazis as the greatest international threat and villain of the period. Finally, we will turn to the representations of the American Catholic Church and the outbreak, and initial stages of, World War II, which can be thought of as the last throes of the long 1930s.

We have already been introduced to the concept of the fighting Father in chapter one and have discussed how the incorruptible spirituality of the screen priest was fused with a patriotic zeal. C. Aubrey Smith's priest in *The Hurricane* and Spencer Tracy's in *Boys' Town* provided excellent examples. The most pointed illustration was the character of Father Jerry Connolly from the film, *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938). In the film, Connolly (Pat O'Brien) not only tends to the spiritual needs of his parishioners but is also a man possessing extraordinary physical strength. As we discussed previously, not only does Connolly land a knock-out punch to a drunk who he finds taunting the rough-and-ready street kids of the title, he is also the local community's basketball coach. Moreover, he is renowned as the man

who ran a blistering 90 yards against New York University during his college football days.

However, the theme of the war-time fighting Father was drawn even more explicitly in *The Fighting 69th* (1940). The film recounted the true story of the Rainbow Division and its Irish Catholic contingent who went from New York City to the fields of France during World War I. From its inception, the PCA were keen to ensure that the film presented if not an authentic Catholic flavour then a tone complementary to the agenda of the American Catholic Church. In December 1939, Breen wrote to producer Jack Warner commenting that, "In connection with this story, we presume that you will secure the services of a Catholic priest to serve as a technical advisor on this story. This, we feel, is very important."<sup>1</sup> Breen also ensured that the script was suitably reverent to the faith.<sup>2</sup> On December 8, 1939, he instructed Warner to delete the line, "Hi Saint Francis, how's all the monks?" as it was "likely to give offence to large numbers of motion picture patrons, especially Catholics."<sup>3</sup>

Once again, real-life Catholic Pat O'Brien assumed the role of the superman priest. As the unit's chaplain, O'Brien's Father Francis Duffy embodied the virtues of patriotism, spiritual piety and moral and physical strength. Serving in the capacity of a priest, philosopher and, vitally, soldier, Duffy counsels his fellow soldiers that, "Greater love hath no man than he who lay down his life for his brothers." Duffy not only offers spiritual guidance to the soldiers, in the form of an ode to sacrifice, but he also dignifies himself in battle. In one scene, he rescues soldiers who have been buried under heavy wooden beams, which collapsed on them during an attack by the enemy. The film's central relationship is between Duffy and the selfish, cowardly Jerry Plunkett (James Cagney). The other soldiers and officers shun Plunkett after his cowardice costs the lives of their brothers in arms, but Duffy believes that deep down Plunkett is a good, strong man. That is to say, an American Catholic. He tries to reach out to Plunkett, who is so full of self-loathing that he rejects the chaplain's offers. "You're trying to convert me," Plunkett spits. "I'm not trying to convert you," Duffy replies serenely, "I'm just asking you to come back to your religion and recognise the fact of Almighty God." In the film's finale, Plunkett

finally gains the courage he needs to go into battle. His epiphany comes when he listens to Duffy's reading of the Lord's Prayer. Plunkett charges into battle, saves his platoon and throws himself upon a grenade. Thus, he sacrifices his own life so that his Sergeant may live. His devoutly Catholic comrades then race to bring Plunkett back to Father Duffy before he exhales his dying breath. The film's original synopsis made it clear that their actions were fulfilling more than the mantra to never leave a soldier behind. "They carry him back," it reads, "to the consolation and the forgiveness that only Father Duffy and the Church can offer."<sup>4</sup>

Abundantly clear was the film's central theme that Father Duffy, as an American Catholic priest, not only fought like a lion and tended to the spiritual needs of his fellow Catholics but to all Americans who are willing to sacrifice for the protection of their nation and to love its all-embracing but clearly Catholicised social moral code. In fact, in one scene, to comfort a dying soldier Duffy, without hesitation or seeming contradiction, reads to the man a Hebrew prayer. The fighting Father also gives a stirring soliloquy in which he presents the notion that to be truly American one must accept Catholicism and demonstrate that acceptance by fighting, and sacrificing, for the Catholic infused American Morality.

Oh Heavenly Father, hear, I beseech you, the prayer of this, America's lost generation. They loved life too oh Lord... Don't let it be forgotten Father... Let the tired eyes of a troubled world rise up and see the shining citadel of which these young lives formed the imperishable stones – America, a citadel of peace.

To underscore this theme and further engender it into popular culture, the film ends with a dissolve to the actual statue of the historical Father Duffy in New York, thereby further attempting to engender the film's "culture" into "civilisation" by presenting the two concepts as one.

The reviews in the mainstream press further highlighted and entrenched the notion that the fighting Father protects America from evil. Martin Quigley's *Motion Picture Herald* published its review of

the film on January 13, 1940. The article drew together these themes in one succinct sentence. "The screen representation of Father Duffy," it read, "is a preachment for patriotism."<sup>5</sup> In January 1940, *The Hollywood Reporter* echoed this sentiment with the words, "[The film] leaves profound confidence in the invincibility of human faith and divine omnipotence."<sup>6</sup> Yet another review argued that, "All admirably blended there has been created a valiant, spirited film of patriotic fervour to stir the pride of the beholder, without resorting to national hatreds; of spiritual triumphs more than physical valour, under the ultimate tests."<sup>7</sup> It is worth pointing out just how comfortably the words "patriotic fervour" and "spiritual triumph" sit together in this review.

Further praise for the film's theme was conferred by the Evansville District National Council of Catholic Women, which, in 1941, wrote to the producing studio Paramount Pictures. "Be it, therefore, resolved," the letter read, "that the members attending this district meeting, which is a part of the National Council of the N.C.C.W. (with a membership of over 100,000 Catholic women) go on record as being most appreciative of the consideration that has been given [via *The Fighting 69th* to] Catholic subjects and that this meeting take this means of expressing its gratitude and appreciation."<sup>8</sup>

We have seen again, as was the case in chapter one, that American Catholic cultural producers sought to present the priest as an agent of America, whose compassion, piety, simplicity and strength not only appealed to the Catholic faithful but was also highly compatible with other Judeo-Christian faiths and denominations. Indeed, the American Catholic Church attempted to depict itself as the lifeblood of the American body. Moreover, the PCA were advocating a popular interpretation of the American priest as the only warrior one could trust to defeat the foreign evils of the modern world. However, priests were not warriors who offered sanctuary; they would lay down their lives and, crucially, take the lives of others, of the "Other", to protect the "American way of life".

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the PCA and the Legion of Decency did not deny the existence of Protestantism, or attempt to explicitly undermine it. Rather, they occasionally sought to employ

Protestant religious figures to further support and entrench the American Catholic Church's attempts to promote the *kulturkampf*. This was especially the case when depicting "war" against a foreign enemy. The devoutly Catholic John Ford's 1939 film *Drums Along the Mohawk* is a useful example. The film is set just before the start of the American war of independence. A group of settlers in the Mohawk valley are threatened by a tribe of vicious Native American warriors. That is, the utopian ideal of citadel America was threatened by an external enemy with an alien set of principles. Farmer and newly-wed Gil Martin hopes that violence will not be necessary. "We won't have any trouble from the Indians," he argues, "We've always treated them fair."

However, Gil learns that it does not matter how fairly one treats another if that person, or group, is determined upon a course of invasion. The tribe attacks the settlement without warning. They burn Gil's home to the ground and destroy his crop. The settlers flee and are forced to hide in a nearby fort wherein the pious Gil learns that only two-fisted, patriotic action can preserve the nation. There they come under siege not only from the marauding Indians but also from the imperialist British of whom, it is revealed, the Indians are the henchmen. Thus, the film creates both an anti-imperialist theme and represents the Indians as "foreigners". Gil volunteers to go for help which will require a heroic marathon, run at full sprint, through enemy territory to the nearest friendly settlement. However, though he marches through the valley of death he fears no evil as he is emboldened by his spiritual serenity, physical strength and willingness to sacrifice himself. Indeed, in the film's finale, as the Indians fail to catch Gil, who is too quick and determined, Reverend Parsons leads the survivors in prayer. He asks God to give them the strength to defeat the "Tories and savage Indians" and to, significantly, "drive our enemy back into the wilderness", or outside of civilisation. Though the film does not mention explicitly or depict American Catholicism, it is brimming with themes and language perfectly consistent with the approved cinematic representation of American Catholicism advocated by the PCA and the Legion, that only further entrenches those values promoted in such efforts as *The Fighting 69th*. Moreover, the native peoples represented in the film were the Iroquois who were noted as an especially cruel tribe,

further justifying the Americans' violent actions. The image of the Iroquois and descriptions of their way of life had been largely created by Catholic Jesuit missionaries.

What is of note here is that in the examples above the enemy was not particularly specified or determined. The Germans of World War I, the British and the Native Americans were all portrayed as a somewhat faceless outsider or "them" group, which stood opposed to the Catholic-infused Americanism. Arguably the faceless enemy was promoted to demonstrate that the villainy of the modern world could take many forms, especially non- or anti-Catholic guises, and to emphasise the heroic defence of the homeland mounted by the American Catholic Church. However, the American Catholic Church did highlight international communism as a clear and present danger to their survival. With its call to militant atheism the ideology of communism obviously represented a very genuine threat to Catholicism. After all, it sought its eradication. Moreover, now that communism had been formalised in a sovereign state, the USSR, that threat was no longer abstract or theoretical. Indeed, in the early 1930s, in a private meeting Pope Pius XI had asked Will Hays to keep communist propaganda off the screen. According to Frank Walsh, Hays claimed that the Pope showed him a communication from Stalin to communist party leaders throughout the world directing them to take control of the film industry wherever they could.<sup>9</sup> In other words, Hays was told that fire must be fought with fire.

This fear of communism was shared by American Protestants. In 1947, delegates to the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America urged for a nationwide, inter-faith effort to push back "the steadily increasing adherence to the materialistic faith of Marxian philosophy, fostered by the expansion of the Soviet Union."<sup>10</sup> Its resolution pinpointed the dangers of Stalin's "military conquests, political coercion and able propaganda".<sup>11</sup> In 1948, Dr Ralph Diffendorfer added that communist ideology spoke "to the hungry and the landless, the debt ridden and the oppressed.

They [communists] can be pushed back only by the forceful offensive of an idea and program that stops them in their tracks.

Christians must either serve the needs of all God's men better than the communists do or else be prepared to yield ground to them. The issue is that clear.<sup>12</sup>

In 1949, a resolution of the North American Foreign Missions Conference set the threat posed by communism towards Christianity into a historical perspective. "Not since the spread of Islam from Arabia in the 7th and 8th Centuries," it read, "has the Church met such a combination of fanatical zeal and political expansionism."<sup>13</sup>

These quotes date from the period immediately after the one under discussion here. However, the sentiment, fear and understanding of the communist assault among religious institutions in the US had existed just as openly during the long 1930s.<sup>14</sup> The Hays Office had expressed such concerns as early as 1931 where, in reference to the wave of gangster films highlighting the seediness of urban Americana, it was noted that, "We [Christian America] might be playing into the hands of the communists, offering them material which they could use to assault the American culture."<sup>15</sup> The seed of this concern had in fact arguably been sown during the silent era where, as Kevin Brownlow discusses, films seemingly dealt with contemporary issues that revealed "the corruption of city politics, the scandal of white slave rackets and the exploitation of immigrants", castigations of which would have been interpreted by the establishment as having a Red tone.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, echoing a sentiment at the core of this monograph, Franklin Roosevelt, in his presidential nomination acceptance speech of June 27, 1936, stressed that the US "was waging a great war".

It is not alone a war against want and destitution and economic demoralisation. It is a war for the survival of democracy. We are fighting to save a great and precious form of government for ourselves and for the world.<sup>17</sup>

This was a clear reference to international communism. In 1937 and 1938, Gallup produced a number of surveys the results of which suggest that fascism, which may be commonly assumed to have been the intended target of FDR's words, was more highly regarded in America

than communism. "If you had to choose," one of the survey's questions asked, "between fascism and communism, which would you choose?" 61 percent chose fascism. When asked, "Which do you think is worse, communism or fascism?", of those polled 58 percent said communism.<sup>18</sup>

Given the nationwide fear of communism and the well expressed notion that the US was engaged in a war with it, it becomes apparent why the American Catholic Church took the lead in waging said battle and why other denominations were happy to allow them to do so. After all, the statements above were perfectly consistent with American Catholic belief, and ambitions to create a "oneness", even though their "war", as we have so far seen, extended beyond combating communism. Moreover, the American Catholic Church, via the PCA and the Legion of Decency was best placed to advocate this war in popular culture. Indeed, in August 1938, Archbishop McNicholas had issued a press release stating that,

The Legion views with grave apprehension those efforts now being made to utilise the cinema for the spread of ideas antagonistic, not only to traditional Christian morality but to all religion. It must oppose the efforts of those who would make the motion pictures an agency for the dissemination of the false, atheistic and immoral doctrine repeatedly condemned by all accepted moral teachers.<sup>19</sup>

The methods seemingly employed to fight international communism were twofold. On the one hand, there was the promotion of the Catholic-infused Americanism as we have seen. The other method was consistent with the assault upon the theme of abortion and homosexuality, namely to eradicate it a concept from public discourse. It made sense as to why this technique would be used as communism was 1) understood by the American Catholic Church as another form of degeneration similar to abortion and homosexuality; and 2) to American Catholics communism was a philosophy that would be tolerant of and conducive to those themes above described in 1. This was so despite the fact that during the long 1930s, the Soviet Union



advocated a more traditional role for women, encouraged the birth rate to grow and also considered homosexuality to be an aberration particularly endorsed by their chief antagonists, the Nazis.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the PCA and the Legion were determined to rid the screen of anything they considered to be pro-communistic.

The most illuminating example was the development of the 1938 film, *Blockade*. Indeed, in 1938, the Production Code Administration forbade the makers of the film *Blockade* (ostensibly an anti-fascist film about the Spanish civil war) from using any iconography that would show sympathy for one side over another. That is, the film was forbidden to show sympathy for the democratically-elected socialist government over Franco's nationalists, with whom, being markedly pro-Catholic, the American Catholic Church was in broad sympathy. After all, Franco too was engaged in a battle against communism. Joseph Breen's instructions were so strict that the PCA even required the filmmakers not to "identify, at any time, the uniforms of the soldiers" or else the film would be denied certification of approval and would, as a consequence, face a total nation-wide theatre ban.<sup>21</sup> On February 3, 1937, Breen went even further. Writing to the film's producer, Walter Wanger, he stated that "none of the incidents or locations in your story could possibly be tied in with the actual events that have occurred or are occurring in Spain."<sup>22</sup> Specific plot points were highlighted to the producers. "Scene 337 et seq: Is it likely that the suggestion, re: sinking of the food supplies ships, is likely to identify soldiers with one faction in the present Spanish civil war?" Breen asked. "If so, you had better change it."<sup>23</sup> Breen made his reasoning quite clear to Wanger. "Any material involved with, or played against, the background of the present civil war in Spain," Breen wrote, "in our judgment is highly dangerous."<sup>24</sup> It was thought that any portrayal that was not wholly committed to the Franquista cause was liable to promote communism within the United States.

In fact, the deletions extended to any language that was not in full support of a Catholic philosophy. "Please delete the words 'Holy Trinity,'" Breen ordered, "from Ney's speech, because it is likely to be accepted as blasphemous."<sup>25</sup> In addition, because communism threatened the very foundations of Catholic doctrine, the PCA was

extremely sensitive to other themes which they held that communism advocated and the American Catholic Church did not, most notably adultery and pre-marital sex. Breen wrote to Wanger concerning a plot point in which there was a suggestion of pre-marital sexual relations between the hero, Marco and the heroine, Norma. "If we are correct in this impression," Breen stated, "we would like to suggest that . . . such illicit sex must be shown, under the code, to be definitely wrong, must not be condoned, must not be justified, must not be made to appear right and acceptable, and the sinners must be punished."<sup>26</sup> Such was the fervour with which the PCA attempted to deny the existence of communism in American culture that Breen used a zeal in his description not entirely present in his language to describe films entirely centred on illicit sex. We see a complementary passage in a letter written by Breen and sent to Wanger on February 22, 1937. "Please delete," Breen demanded, "the title of the book 'Madame Bovary'" because the American Catholic Church was "of the opinion that there is no need at any time to emphasis books which . . . border on the pornographic."<sup>27</sup>

The producers fully complied. In the finished product, Marco is a Spanish peasant but he wears an unmarked uniform and speaks and behaves in an entirely Americanised fashion. Indeed, he wants to amass material prosperity and looks forward to employing modern techniques of farming, including chemical fertiliser and tractors. In short, his behaviour and attitude is fully consistent with the average middle-class American farmer.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the film was given a "separate classification" by the Legion of Decency. It had wanted to condemn the film but displayed a remarkably astute political savoir faire to acknowledge that there was a significant minority of Americans who sympathised with the Spanish Republic. An outright condemnation of the film would have put the American Catholic Church at odds with the nation's liberal wing and not to mention a good deal of Hispanic immigrants. As such, the "separate classification" served to isolate the picture without incurring the full ire of anti-fascists or pro-Republicans, which could have threatened to undermine the American Catholic Church's privileged position in cultural production or, perhaps more dangerously, opened the door for a frank discussion on the very points the PCA and the Legion sought to prevent from

public discourse. In other words, it would potentially undermine the development of a "oneness". In the Legion's catalogue the review for *Blockade* reads, "Many people will regard the picture as containing foreign political propaganda in favour of one side in the present struggle in Spain."<sup>29</sup>

Upon release, the film was still bitterly criticised by conservative groups for being communist propaganda. A certain Father Joseph Luther of Detroit asked God to smite anyone who watches the film and the *Brooklyn Tablet* called for a boycott of the producing studio for bringing "Red fabrication" to the public. Furthermore, the *Catholic News* described the film as "un-American, totalitarian [that is, pro-communist] foreign political propaganda", and added, "We harbour the hope that 'Blockade' represents not a new turn in policy, not the beginning of a new picture cycle, but a mistake made in the hectic hurry of Hollywood production."<sup>30</sup> The article continued to quote from the encyclical on "Atheistic Communism" which argued that,

It is a system full of errors and sophisms. It is in opposition both to reason and to Divine Revelation. It subverts the social order, because it means the destruction of its foundations: because it ignores the true origin and purpose of the state: because it denies the rights, dignity and liberty of human personality.<sup>31</sup>

In further response to the mere existence of this film, the Knights of Columbus released a special bulletin in which they thoroughly castigated the production as "leftist propaganda", a "misrepresentation of the war in Spain, an endorsed glorification of the Spanish Reds", and a "traducing of Spanish nationalists". The report went on to claim that, "Catholics present [at a screening in New York's Rockefeller Centre] stated it was insulting to truth and to Catholic people". Moreover, the bulletin described the film as "a special pleading on behalf of forces inimical to the ideals of American democracy and the Christianity they profess".<sup>32</sup> They did not stop there. In July 1938, the Knights of Columbus published an edition of *Six Twenty One: American Ideals, Columbian Principles Dedicated to the Love of God*, in which they claimed that, "the American public will unmistakably voice their resentment

of the bold attempt to pull the wool of foreign political propaganda over their eyes".<sup>33</sup> In short, a film which had been castrated by the American Catholic cultural producers was lambasted by its other, less prominent or politicised agencies as communistic poison merely because it was set in a nation where communism enjoyed a measure of sympathy.

Wanger attempted to mount a valiant defence of his project, in which he used similar rhetoric to the American Catholic Church. On June 26, 1938, he was quoted in *The New York Times* arguing that, "I will admit there is a message in my picture. It is this American message, a message that has been verified by our congress and by our president: that ruthless bombing of non combatants, no matter which government does it, is something that is horrible and should not be tolerated."<sup>34</sup> However, his efforts were to no avail. Archbishop McNicholas argued that watching *Blockade* would turn audiences "against Christ"; with Legion executive secretary McClafferty adding that the film was "not only un-Christian but anti-Christian".<sup>35</sup>

However, though the *Blockade* example clearly demonstrates American Catholic action towards fighting communism it also reveals a limitation to the influence of the PCA, the Legion and the American Catholic Church in the *kulturkampf*. Firstly, the film was still released, even though the PCA had sterilised it, as such communism was not "eradicated" from popular culture. Secondly, there did exist a vocal minority in the US who saw the American Catholic treatment of and reaction to *Blockade* as wholly negative. An article in *Film Survey*, published in August 1939, was particularly unflinching. "No longer is the Legion of Decency the mere watch dog of decency," the text read. "It is the self appointed censor of a nation's progressive ideals. It brings to the movie the standard of narrow suppressor, which from time immemorial has fought and blocked all forms of civilised progress."<sup>36</sup>

However, one must conclude that the *Blockade* incident only strengthened, and certainly did not weaken, the position of centrality occupied by American Catholic cultural producers during the period in question. Indeed, not only had the awarding of a "separate classification" spared the Legion of any meaningful, or particularly numerous, accusations of total, or for that matter totalitarian, censorship but

the episode had only highlighted the extent to which anti-communism existed in the US. Furthermore, the American Catholic Church's strategy of an indirect smothering of communism by attempting to erase it from popular discourse and conceptualisation was mirrored by the US government's actions towards the actual Spanish civil war (as opposed to representations of it). On August 3, 1936, a headline in the William Randolph Hearst newspaper *The Journal* loudly proclaimed "Red Madrid Ruled By Trotsky". This view was supported by the communist-hating British ambassador to Spain, Sir Henry Clifton. Married to a White Russian,<sup>37</sup> Clifton served as an ambassador to Admiral Kolchak's "All Russian Government", which fought against the Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war. He described the Spanish Republic as "communist controlled hordes, inspired by Comintern and supported by human scum." According to Paul Preston, US investment in Spain was relatively insignificant (\$80 million in 1936), as such American antipathy towards the Republic was not in defence of "interests" but ideology. Although FDR had acting Secretary of State William Phillips announce, on August 7, 1936, that the US would "scrupulously refrain from any interference whatsoever in the unfortunate Spanish situation" this amounted to tacit support for Franco. Indeed, Texaco Oil gave Franco \$6 million in credit to supply petroleum needs. However, the Glenn A. Martin aircraft company and businessman Robert Cuse were refused export licenses to fulfil long-standing orders to the Spanish Republic.<sup>38</sup> It should though be noted that after World War II many US politicians expressed regret and contrition towards the American stance. Sumner Wells, Under-Secretary of State (1937–43), wrote that "of all our blind isolationist policies the most disastrous was our attitude on the Spanish civil war".<sup>39</sup> This was primarily because the conflict was used by fascism both to consolidate itself and test-run its military infrastructure and tactics, seen in the example of Guernica<sup>40</sup> in April 1937, which, to some extent, contributed towards the outbreak of World War II. However, this is the power of hindsight. At the time, as noted above, Americans were far more concerned with communism than with fascism. Indeed, the radio priest Father Coughlin attempted to rally support for Franco, using his broadcast time to encourage listeners to inundate FDR

with letters demanding that the US overtly and tangibly support the communist-fighting, Spanish general.<sup>41</sup>

Of course, international communism was also represented as embodied by the USSR. Here the same themes were employed: a mixture of asserting American superiority and wholesale attempts to deny the Soviet Union as a "live" or present feature in popular culture. Indeed, the devoutly Catholic Frank Capra was forbidden from producing a film about Soviet industrialisation and, in general, until the outbreak of World War II in Europe, the USSR did not fully exist as a theme for treatment in Hollywood. A notable exception was the 1939 film, *Ninotchka*, in which Greta Garbo played a steely and emotionless Soviet diplomat on a mission in Paris who is romanced into defecting by a heroically debonair American. Despite it openly discussing international communism, the USSR was nevertheless ridiculed, albeit lightly, and its most trusted female agent was shown to have renounced communism and embraced Americanism before the film ends. Moreover, it was filmed after the outbreak of World War II in Europe from which point the Nazis were considered a greater threat. Nevertheless, the American Catholic Church's policy was only compounded by the emerging truth of the show trials, the Soviet invasion of Finland and the apparent failure of the Stalin Constitution of 1936 to affect any real change *vis a vis* Soviet civil liberties. The PCA and the Legion of Decency's fear of international communism effectively saw them also ignore or "deny" Soviet-made films. Indeed, the Legion did not even classify them. This did lead to some discontent within the American Catholic Church. When the Soviet film *Three Songs of Lenin* (1933) played in Chicago unedited, Quigley was moved to comment that either no one was doing their job (properly by allowing it to be screened) or else, "it had been seen by a particularly stupid person".<sup>42</sup>

However, the Soviet Union was a sovereign state with diplomatic relations to the United States (the US officially recognised the USSR in 1933) and as such it was invited to exhibit a pavilion at the 1939 New York Worlds Fair. A cultural event outside the remit of the PCA and the Legion, the American Catholic Church was, nevertheless, moved to challenge the Soviet Union's participation in it. Dr Philip Cummings, director of the English Speaking Union, was particularly vehement

in his denunciation of Soviet participation. In 1939, he gave a speech titled, "Keeping your Mind American". In it he criticised the organisers of the New York Worlds Fair for allowing the Soviet Union to break the defensive line of the American Catholic Church's *kulturkampf* home guard. The very existence of a Soviet pavilion, Cummings argued, gave the USSR an opportunity to "corrupt the minds of good Americans".<sup>43</sup> Cummings' argument was endorsed by the Catholic priest, William McCann, who proclaimed that every American visitor to the Soviet Pavilion "should draw a cross in his imagination and place it before the towering Soviet Pavilion."<sup>44</sup> This was echoed further by the New Jersey State Court of Catholic Daughters of America, which believed Soviet participation in the Worlds Fair represented the American government's acquiescence to the USSR's "vicious propaganda of birth control, human sterilisation and other things that undermine society" (and were vigorously challenged by the PCA and the Legion).<sup>45</sup> Although the Fair's organisers did not ban or remove the Soviet pavilion they did publicly reassert American superiority by extending the flag-pole of the US Pavilion, from which hung the Stars and Stripes, so that it stood taller from the ground than the Soviet Pavilion, which had to that point been the tallest building at the Worlds Fair.

Arguably more troubling to the American Catholic Church than international communism, which, in many ways, was out of their remit to fully influence, was the spectre of domestic communism. It was considered imperative that the means of American cultural production be employed to destroy or, at the very least, bankrupt this home-grown version of the ideology before it could obtain purchase upon the public imagination. Indeed, as Marx and Engels wrote, "The communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."<sup>46</sup> Seeming as the American Catholic Church had tied itself so fully with American conceptions of property, institutions, ideology and business it is readily apparent as to how they would interpret the growth of domestic communism. Not only would the Catholic-infused social moral code of Americanism be subverted but the American Catholic Church as an institution would also face literal destruction. The prospect of domestic communists

dragging priests into the streets by the seams of their cassocks to be publicly executed, inspired the American Catholic Church into full scale action.

The PCA and the Legion were volcanically concerned about presenting or allowing the presentation of iconography that would either stimulate or encourage the development of communism from within the United States. This was made abundantly clear in a letter written by PCA consultant Dr Tippy-Marxis, who made his concern apparent to Martin Quigley in March 1935. "The code does not take sufficient account," he argued, "of the moral standards which are emerging out of the present social ferment, and especially of the new concepts of industrial and political responsibility. The morality of collective action needs statement."<sup>47</sup> Though he could not bring himself to name communism, as a superstitious actor refers to *Macbeth* as "The Scottish Play", the phrases "collective action" and "industrial and political responsibility" obviously refer to emerging workers' movements inside the borders of the United States.

The fear of domestic communism unified the American Catholic Church, the cinema industry and the establishment more so than any other battle in the *kulturkampf*. These three institutions more broadly were convinced that communists had themselves already infiltrated Hollywood and were fast creating a fifth column there. This sentiment derived from the significant number of New York playwrights who had flown the width of the country to chance their hand in cinema.<sup>48</sup> They brought with them the social commentary that had been established on the east coast stage and a verisimilitude, or at least a desire to present social authenticity, not before seen in Hollywood. Additionally, they imported a Europeanised social vernacular from which Hollywood had hitherto been isolated. Such was the case with the writer Samuel Ornitz<sup>49</sup> who arrived in LA in 1932, only to complain to Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) leader Rose Stokes that it was "the first fascist city in America".<sup>50</sup> Martin Quigley went so far as to associate Jews (many of whom managed Hollywood studios and were New York playwrights) with domestic communism, an opinion based on the presence of anti-Semitism in the US and the communist principle of ending racism. In January 1939, he told Breen that,



"In many places in the industry, especially amongst our Semitic brothers, there seems to be a growing acceptance of the idea of radical propaganda on the screen."<sup>51</sup> Once again the dreaded word, communism, was not stated though its spectre haunts the phrase.

Consequently, an attack was formulated to prevent the development of domestic communism, at least in the cinema. This effort was designed to deny the appearance of anything approaching social ferment in pictures with an urban theme. We can see this strategy in action in the development of the 1935 film, *Black Fury*. The film's central theme discussed a workers' strike in a tyrannically managed coal mine. The film was approved for production by the PCA and certified by the Legion but only after the filmmakers inserted a subtitle which read:

Conditions of the coal industry have vastly improved and are getting better all the time.

"The point here," Breen explained to producer Jack Warner, "is to get in a line or two that may establish the fact that the miners have little to complain against and that Croner [the principal strike leader] is unjust in his criticism of the employing company."<sup>52</sup> What may have begun life as a film about social malcontent and a polemic against the unequal distribution of wealth was released to the public as a paean to American liberal capitalism and the preservation of traditional social hierarchies.<sup>53</sup>

*Manhattan Melodrama* (1937) was afforded the same treatment. In an early sequence the original script called for a communist-inspired riot in which Trotsky, as the ringleader, spoke of the imminence of global revolution. The PCA demanded that the producers remove all references to such a revolution. On March 15, 1937, Breen received a letter in which the filmmakers stated that, "In accordance with your suggestions for making the picture, *Manhattan Melodrama*, acceptable... we have made the following eliminations. Reel 1: The speeches (off screen) at the Socialist meeting, 'Revolution in this world is inevitable' and '...In America not until the working people learn to act not talk.'<sup>54</sup> In the final film, the kindly Mr Rosen bests Trotsky in a verbal dual. Speaking above the crowd, Rosen tells Trotsky that while

a revolution may well be necessary in Tsarist Russia there is no need for one in the United States because everybody is equal regardless of race or religion. That is, Rosen dismisses Trotsky's radicalism and his reason invokes the Declaration of Independence, which first gave language to the "self-evident" American truths "that all men are created equal". Once again the American Catholic Church sought in essence to deny the attraction of communism, presenting it as alien, foreign or "Other", whilst actively promoting the Catholicised Americanism we have seen here and in previous chapters.

This theme was further buttressed in the development of the 1936 film, *Winterset*, which sought to depict similar socialised events to those in *Black Fury* and *Manhattan Melodrama*. Breen was concerned that the original treatment had a "flavour suggestive of propaganda or radicalism".<sup>55</sup> Naturally, the PCA made several suggestions including: "If you use this speech, you should eliminate the expression from speech 285: 'capitalist oppression' as well as the word 'rich' in the fifth line."<sup>56</sup> Even the film, *Mister Smith goes to Washington*, which Joseph Breen eventually described as "a grand yarn", was initially criticised quite bitterly by the PCA for showing a "generally unflattering portrayal of our system of government, which might well lead to such a picture being considered... as a covert attack on the Democratic form of government."<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Samuel Goldwyn passed on buying the rights to film John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* because the "gloom and sordidness of the background and the people [in the story]" highlighted a "pro-communist indication".<sup>58</sup>

In the culture advocated by the American Catholic Church there was no gulf between rich and poor, there was no social disenfranchisement, there was no hostility towards the economic and socio-political status quo. Not only did the American Catholic Church seek to depict, in culture, the US as a heavenly utopia, which plainly did not exist in civilisation, due at the very least to the effects of the Great Depression, but it also spoke of this shaping of popular culture as if it *was* presenting the truth. Therefore, as the PCA and the Legion were "denying" the allure, and indeed existence, of communism in the United States, they claimed that the fruit of their labour, cinema, was merely and simply a reflection of the times in which they lived. Moreover,

they argued that propaganda was something only communists used and from which the PCA and the Legion protected the citizens of America. We have seen this in the continuous references to radical or social propaganda above. Indeed, Quigley further made this point in an editorial published in his newspaper *Motion Picture Herald* on February 22, 1936. Politics of a social nature, he wrote, had "nothing to do with the amusement industry".<sup>59</sup> This remains a paradigm largely embraced by the historiography. Marybeth Hamilton expresses this view when she wrote of Hollywood being only a provider of an "easily consumable commodity" in which "goodness had nothing to do with it".<sup>60</sup> Or as Lugowski put it, Hollywood's "first imperative" was always to make "a fast buck".<sup>61</sup>

The American Catholic Church's strategy was consistent with the wider attack upon domestic communism implemented by other institutions of the establishment. In June 1938, when Gallup asked the question, "Do you believe in free speech?" 97 percent of those polled said "yes". However, when they were then asked, "Do you believe in it to the extent of allowing communists to hold meetings and express their views in this community?", of those polled only 38 percent said "yes". Gallup then asked, "If it were up to you to decide, what would you do about the communist party in this country?" While 8 percent answered that they would "do nothing", 5 percent answered that they should be "put in prison", and 64 percent said that they would "take repressive measures".<sup>62</sup>

In 1938, the creation of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, chaired by Martin Dies (or the Dies Committee as it was known), crystallised establishment views on this subject. The Dies Committee was extremely suspicious of communist influence in American popular culture and was determined to stamp it out. The Dies Committee even accused eight-year-old actress, Shirley Temple of being a "tool of communism".<sup>63</sup> More significantly, the Dies Committee pressured the Works Programs Administration<sup>64</sup> into stopping the publication of the Federal Theatre Project's<sup>65</sup> magazine because, so they claimed, it endorsed communism over Americanism. In her autobiography, Federal Theatre Project (FTP) director Hallie Flanagan explained the rabid sentiment directed against her agency.

"Gradually the real reasons [behind the censorship] began to come out, not all in one conversation but a little at a time." The government asked the FTP,

'Was it true that the magazine was on sale at workers' bookshops?' Yes [we replied] but it was also on sale at Brentano's [a popular book retailer] and all other bookshops. 'Wasn't Pierre de Rohan, the editor, a communist?' On the contrary, he was a Democrat and a World War [I] veteran... 'Wasn't there too much emphasis on poor audiences, too many pictures of squatters in Oklahoma and short sleeved crowds in city parks – was this the kind of audience we wanted?' We wanted our plays to be good enough for any kind of audience, but our chief obligation was towards people who could not afford other types of theatre going. Wasn't that the idea? Or was it? 'Hadn't we (this was broached very carefully) used a quotation from Marx in the magazine?' This staggered me until I remembered we had run W.H. Auden's lines, hoping that they would encourage our directors, actors, designers, and playwrights, who had not had too much encouragement. "The precision of your instrument and the skill of your designers are unparalleled: Unite. Your knowledge and your power are capable of infinite extension: Act... to each his need; from each his power."<sup>66</sup>

Literary references, Flanagan concludes, were a dangerous thing in Washington. In other words, the Dies Committee, employing the same strategy as the American Catholic Church, censored, or "denied", the FTP's magazine because it was afraid it might encourage a swell of communist sympathy within America. In fact, in 1939 HUAC caused the dissolution of the FTP itself, claiming that it had been thoroughly penetrated by communists.<sup>67</sup>

The Nelson Rockefeller-Diego Rivera mural incident of April/May 1933 was another example which demonstrated the establishment's fears that communism might develop within America and its willingness to "deny" its existence. After Picasso and Matisse had both turned him down the young millionaire Nelson Rockefeller asked the highly

acclaimed artist, and well-known socialist, Diego Rivera to paint the mural that would decorate the foyer of the fortress of capitalism, the Rockefeller Centre. Entitled *Man at the Crossroads*, Rockefeller wanted a bold and brilliant piece by a bold and brilliant artist to symbolise the glory of corporate America during a time of depression. Rivera's work caused a very public scandal. The mural depicted workers and peasants, marching together under a red flag, against an army of sinister, gas-masked soldiers. It depicted workers sitting on the head of a crumbling statue of Caesar. Rivera also painted members of high society enjoying a cocktail party while syphilis cells hung ominously over their heads. In the background, left of centre, Rivera painted mounted policeman beating a crowd of demonstrators. The crowd hold aloft a banner on which reads, "We Want Bread!" The most offending image was a portrait of Lenin, shown linking together a number of multi-racial hands. After realising what Rivera was painting upon the walls, Rockefeller had him escorted from the building and the incomplete mural was eventually destroyed.

Rockefeller received a flood of congratulatory letters from other members of the establishment. On May 16, 1933, John G. Edgerton, Chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers, wrote,

I cannot restrain an expression of my admiration for the very courageous and patriotic spirit displayed by you in your recent rejection of the mural, which a foreign artist attempted to use as a medium of subversive propaganda. By this act you have given an inspiring example to all good Americans who believe in the superiority of our institutions, and I believe I reflect in this commendation, the feelings of not only my own constituencies, but of the overwhelming majority of all citizens.<sup>68</sup>

The most striking aspect of Edgerton's letter is not that he condemns the mural; he does not mention anything specific about it. Rather, it is the manner in which he contextualises the incident in relation to contemporary geopolitical affairs. According to Edgerton, Rivera was a foreigner and foreigners are bad (usually because they're communists), whereas Rockefeller was American and America is good. This was a

theme promoted, as we have seen, by the American Catholic Church to much the same effect in such films as *Drums along the Mohawk* and *The Fighting 69th*. This theme was also reflected in a letter by Elan H. Hooter sent to Rockefeller on May 15, 1933. "I suppose there will be plenty of radicals," he wrote, "to make disparaging remarks but do not mistake the voice of a noisy and alien clique for the voice of the [American] people. More power to your arm!"<sup>69</sup> Similarly, on May 11, 1933, Ralph M. Easley, Chairman of the Executive Council of the National Civic Federation, wrote "I am sure that I am expressing the sentiment of every one of our five thousand members when I congratulate you upon your courage and sound Americanism in summarily ousting that colossally impudent Communist Diego Rivera."<sup>70</sup>

The print media promoted the same response. On May 10, 1933, the editorial of the *Pittsburgh Massachusetts Eagle* stated that "Capitalism and communism came to a showdown last night in the field of art. Capitalism won..."<sup>71</sup> On May 11, 1933, the *Somerset PA Daily Herald* was more lucid but no less explicit. "The idea that art," it read,

may emanate from a soul that has been polluted by communistic poison is too absurd for consideration, yet the Rockefellers hired Rivera to paint three murals for the great hall in Rockefeller Center [sic]. When they saw what he was doing, they wanted him to change his themes. He promised to do so but there is no truth in communism... The idea that the sordid conception of life entertained by communists would be saleable to a believer in God, in God and man, could enter none but a communist's mind.<sup>72</sup>

We have seen that the American Catholic Church and the establishment more widely displayed terrific enmity towards the Spanish Republic, the USSR and especially domestic communism. Indeed, as Eric Hobsbawm has argued, the United States' reaction to communism was not located in the "realm of reason" but that of "emotion".<sup>73</sup> Would we then not expect American Catholic cultural producers to show the same emotive reaction to Nazism? The common assumption would assert that during the period in question the United States

was also in the process of, at least, preparing to fight the Nazi threat. However, throughout almost the entirety of the 1930s the American Catholic Church seemingly held Nazi Germany in high regard or certainly advocated neutrality towards it. At the very least, it understood Nazism as a powerful antidote to the disease of communism, which was always considered the greater peril. Indeed, until the true horror of Nazism was revealed to the US public, the American Catholic Church saw various elements of the Nazi ideology as compatible with its own. After all, Nazism did not deny a role for religion and was said to possess a fascination with occult Christian artefacts and mythology. Moreover, Nazism asserted the primacy of a traditional hierarchical social structure and moral values and, finally, it, like the American Catholic Church, was committed to a war against communism. Perhaps this explains why American investment in Nazi Germany accelerated between the years 1929–40 by 48.5 percent while declining everywhere else on continental Europe.<sup>74</sup>

Consequently, unlike Soviet films which it ignored and left unclassified, the Legion of Decency was very much engaged in the exhibition of Nazi cinema. As Johnson has pointed out, of the 120 Nazi-made films the Legion reviewed not one received a "C" for "condemned" classification.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, the first overtly anti-Nazi picture to be produced by Hollywood did not emerge until 1939. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was produced by Warner Brothers, which was avowedly anti-Nazi ever since one of its employees had been the victim of an anti-Semitic attack. Assaulted in a Berlin alley, the man was killed. Jack Warner wrote of the incident, stating that, "Like many an outnumbered Jew he was trapped in an alley. They hit him with fists and clubs and then kicked the life out of him with their boots and left him lying there."<sup>76</sup> The movie was based on an actual spy-ring trial which occurred in New York a year before the film's release (1938). The trial saw four individuals convicted of spying for the German government. The film depicts the heroic efforts of government G-Men in foiling Nazi attempts to infiltrate society.

However, the film was broadly lambasted by American Catholic observers. On November 13, 1939, shortly after he had resigned as ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph Kennedy gave a speech to the

top 30 power brokers in Hollywood at a specially arranged lunch at the Warner Brothers studios. He encouraged the studio heads to "stop making anti-Nazi pictures or using the film medium to promote or show sympathy to the cause of the 'democracies' versus the 'dictators'." He told the gathered audience that Hitler liked Hollywood movies and wanted the US to keep making them but, he added, in order to please Hitler the studio heads were "going to have to get those Jewish names off the screen".<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Father McClafferty, executive secretary of the Legion, argued that *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was communist propaganda and in fact discourteous to the German people.<sup>78</sup> Karl Lischka, on Breen's staff at the PCA, tried to prevent the release of the film. On January 22, 1939, he argued that it was unfair to represent Hitler as a "screaming madman and a bloodthirsty persecutor" in view of his "unchallenged political and social achievements". He also asserted that the film's reference to "the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia is an entirely extraneous matter".<sup>79</sup> Indeed, according to a magazine article by John Twoomey, studios should have spent their time not on such "propaganda" but on productions of "Confessions of a Communist Spy" and "clean entertainment and educational features".<sup>80</sup>

However, a year later, with the phoney war in Europe resoundingly over, US attitudes towards Nazism shifted. The American establishment, inclusive of the American Catholic Church, now understood Germany to be a significant threat to the continuation of their way of life. Consequently, the next few years saw a raft of anti-Nazi pictures. The first was director Frank Borzage's 1940 film, *The Mortal Storm* (produced by MGM). This film differs, importantly, from *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in a few crucial respects: it was set in Germany and depicted the abuses of Nazis on their own population. The movie begins in a small German university town in 1933. A famous Jewish professor is sitting down to dinner with his long-time step-family to celebrate his birthday when news reaches them over the radio that Hitler has been made Chancellor. The professor, his wife, their daughter and their daughter's suitor (James Stewart) are all troubled. Only moments earlier the professor had toasted his family saying, "We pride ourselves on our tolerance and our sense of humour." His step-sons celebrate the



news and quickly become uniformed Nazi goons. They ask Stewart if he intends to join with them. He tells them that he most definitely does not, explaining that "I think peace is better than war. It's as good for a man as food and drink."

The film depicts the tentacles of Nazi power gradually strangling the nation, turning German society from jovial to sinister, paranoid and violent. This is marked by a scene in which revellers in a bar sing German folk songs. Soon uniformed Nazis arrive and the songs turn from those celebrating German folk culture to those glorifying Hitler. Thus, the film depicts Germans as a peaceful people but Nazism as an inherently violent ideology. When an elderly Jewish school teacher refuses to sing the songs praising Hitler he is attacked. Stewart leaps to his defence and his quick actions save him, but as the old man walks home he is set upon in the street and beaten savagely. Shortly afterwards, the Nazis attack Stewart, although he is able to defend himself and, indeed, gives them "a good fight". Soon the professor is arrested and placed in a concentration camp, where he dies of a subsequent heart attack.

The film was clearly an attack on Nazi Germany and, indeed, led to a ban in Germany of all MGM movies. However, the film's hero, James Stewart, was not only renowned for playing all-American heroes (such as Jefferson Smith in *Mr Smith goes to Washington*) but also played his character with an American accent. This is contrasted with the actors playing the Nazis, who do so with "foreign" accents. Moreover, Stewart's character was not called Fritz or Klaus, or any other name unfamiliar to Americans but, rather, Martin; a very Americanised moniker. Thus, while the film was about Germany and set in Germany it can be understood to depict an attack on an American hero embodying American values, which, as we have seen, had at least to some extent been infused with a Catholic flavour. This was highlighted in the review of the film published in *The Hollywood Reporter*. "James Stewart," the article read, "gives complete sincerity of purpose to his belief in political freedom."<sup>81</sup> Of importance to note here is that the review underscores Stewart's actions and not those of his character.

*Film Daily* also commented on the film's significance in the battle against the Nazis. "Every vital period in human affairs since the screen

attained maturity," the author wrote, "has witnessed the emergence of one great picture to reflect and interpret it."<sup>82</sup> This was not a case of Orwellian *doublethink* whereby the establishment denied that it had ever favourably discussed Nazism (that would emerge during the war and be further entrenched during the Cold War) nor was it a frank admission of a miscalculation of judgment. Rather, the establishment simply stopped criticising anti-Nazi representations and, instead, encouraged them. It was, in short, a pragmatic shift in policy. This was acknowledged by Quigley's own newspaper *Motion Picture Herald*. On June 15, 1940, it published an article about *The Mortal Storm* in which it commented that, "A few months or weeks ago this Hollywood press audience would have used the word propaganda to describe the film and speculated on the policy prompting its manufacture. The word was not heard in the auditorium or in the foyer."<sup>83</sup>

Consistent with the negative representations of Nazi Germany, from the onset of World War II a parallel move saw positive representations of the USSR emerge in American popular culture. Naturally, this was not because the American Catholic Church or the establishment had experienced a change of opinion *vis à vis* communism but as a result of the grand alliance between the USSR, the UK and the US. How would we expect the PCA and the Legion to react to the depictions of this political necessity when we consider their passionately anti communist stance? Our first reaction would be to expect resistance. In 1942, Warner Brothers put into production a film entitled *Mission to Moscow*. It was based on the memoirs of Joseph E. Davies who had been FDR's ambassador to the Soviet Union during the 1930s. It was an unashamedly positive representation of Soviet life and philosophy and a rich paean to the Soviet principle of collective security. It begins with the Soviet foreign minister Litvinov addressing the League of Nations in 1933, just as the Nazis have come to power in Germany. "There is no security for any of us unless there is security for all," Litvinov argues. In reality, Soviet pleas for collective security were broadly ignored by the "great powers", especially in Europe, who in fact first attempted to court Mussolini and only allied with the Soviet Union after the start of World War II. According to the film's revisionism though, Roosevelt immediately dispatches Davies to Moscow so as to learn more about the Soviet Union.

In the Kremlin, Davies meets Litvinov, who tells the American that, "We in Russia have learnt to judge nations by what they do and not by what their representatives say". Davies immediately respects the tone and demeanour of Litvinov as his no-nonsense, actions-speak-louder-than-words approach is simpatico with Davies' folksy Americanism. In a later scene, Davies is given an audience with Stalin himself, who is presented as a thoughtful, sensitive man of firm character. In fact, Stalin preternaturally guesses that the British and French will follow the loathsome policy of appeasement. Davies is so utterly convinced by Stalin's intellectual strength and dignified composure that when the Nazis invade Russia, he promises FDR that "Russia will hold!"

Not only did the film rewrite the official American view of the Soviet Union to depict it as a trusted, responsible ally but it also sought to erase from US popular culture any doubts concerning human rights abuses in the USSR and the legitimacy of law there. Yet, rather than simply ignoring the purges and show trials, the film actually attempted to justify them. In fact, the famous show trials of 1938 are openly documented in film yet they are framed by a conversation between Davies and FDR in which the ambassador informs the president that the confessions of the defendants, including of course Bukharin, were honest and not taken under duress. The film was magnificently well received by the popular press. *Variety* described the picture as "not only a document of great importance but a compelling, finely wrought motion picture."<sup>84</sup> *The New York Times* added that the film had been "acclaimed by the New York press as brilliant, informing, a timely presentation of an important subject".<sup>85</sup> In other words, the film was presented to the public as historical fact.

If *Mission to Moscow* had been presented to the PCA before the US' entry into World War II it would undoubtedly have been unapproved for production. If in the unlikely event that the producers had forged ahead with the project without PCA approval, the film would undoubtedly have been condemned by the Legion. However, having read the script, Breen wrote to Jack Warner stating that we are "happy to report that it meets the requirements of the code".<sup>86</sup> This was a most bizarre conclusion given that *Mission to Moscow* positively depicted

an openly anti-liberal, anti-religious, foreign, communistic ideology. Despite the fact that the film was clearly in violation of the code, the PCA embraced the project suggesting only minimal changes. To what extent should we be surprised? We have noted before that despite their weighty influence the American Catholic Church did not fully control every aspect of cultural production in the United States. Consequently, as the country was at war there would be very little the PCA or the Legion could do in the face of war time real-politik. Certainly, political pressure would have been applied so as to prevent any public condemnation of an ally (the USSR). After all, in 1942 the threat of an invasion of the US by Japan seemed quite real as the Asian Tiger expanded across the pacific. The USSR's survival was imperative if the Japanese were to be discouraged.

There did seem though to be a hint of reluctance on Breen's behalf to entirely relinquish the weapons with which he had been fighting communism for a decade. On December 23, 1942, Breen wrote to Warner concerning the word "appeasement" which appeared in the script and was, by that time, a slogan of disapproval toward pre-World War II European policy regarding Nazi Germany. As such, to use the word would be to criticise the British, who were of course also a US ally and, moreover, a Christian ally too, if not Catholic. Having made clear his discomfort at the criticism of the British and French in the script, Breen wrote that the State Department "assures us, however, that these lines are written with the approval of Mr Davies, whom, he suggests knows the thoughts of our State Department in this particular matter. Mr Bruckner also tells us," Breen continues,

that he has been in close touch with Mr Melletti's Bureau of the Office of War Information, and indicates this Bureau's approval of this particular phase of your story and the dialogue above referred to [concerning the use of the word 'appeasement']. In the face of all this, it seems to me that we in this office can do little but approve the material herein referred to".<sup>87</sup>

Further evidence of reluctance to advocate the wartime pro-Soviet message can be found in the Legion's classification of the film. Although

the film was rated A-2, meaning that it was deemed perfectly acceptable for adult audiences, the accompanying text somewhat qualified the classification. "The film in its sympathetic portrayal of the governing regime in Russia," so read the Legion's comments, "makes no reference to the anti-religious philosophy and policy of the social regime."<sup>88</sup>

However, before we conclude entirely that the Legion and the PCA held no sway or influence we must remind ourselves that during times of war, it seems common practice to employ the policy of "my enemy's enemy is my friend". Moreover, as we have demonstrated, the long 1930s saw the American Catholic Church mount such a mighty effort to infuse a brand of Catholicism into the social moral code that when it came to the prosecution of a hot war they were ready to address any theme which would ensure the direct victory of the Americanism they had spent the last decade formulating, shaping and promoting (and, arguably, wholeheartedly believing in). Indeed, in 1943, MGM sought to produce another pro-Soviet film, titled *The Song of Russia*, which would actually depict the heroism of Soviet forces in battle. It featured a piece of music called *The Guerrillas' Song*. Its lyrics were an uncompromising advocate on behalf of the Soviet war effort.

Soldiers of the Soviet Republic  
You do the fighting  
We will do the sniping  
Rise up you angels of destruction  
Russia is burning  
There'll be no returning  
Fight till the right is won  
Hold back the sun until  
The Freedom-loving men march on

Despite its promotion of the Soviet warrior and its arguably blasphemous allusion to the heavenly angels, on December 15, 1942, Breen wrote to the producer Louis Mayer stating, "We have read the lyrics for The Guerrillas' Song for your proposed picture The Song of Russia. We are happy to report that these meet the requirements of the code."<sup>89</sup> *North Star* (1943) was another unabashedly pro-Soviet film from the

era. Like *Mission to Moscow*, *North Star* featured the openly Catholic Walter Houston. The film depicts a group of Ukrainian resistance fighters in their guerrilla war against the invading Nazis. It opens with a glorified depiction of life on the collective farm and portrays an evil German doctor harvesting the blood of Soviet children.

Though we have seen a significant change of attitude towards the representation of international communism at the start of World War II, the same courtesy was not extended to domestic communism. No attempts were made from the outbreak of the war, that is to say, at the tail end of the long 1930s, to produce any motion picture which overtly dealt with material that could have been interpreted as pro-US workers' movement. The PCA and the Legion had given language and zeal to domestic anti-communism that would not be eroded by a hot war and would, more importantly, resurface in the 1950s rebranded as McCarthyism and then again as "containment". In fact, when the Lincoln Brigade returned to the United States, having fought for the Spanish Republic during the civil war, the US State Department relieved them of their passports. Furthermore, Dr Edward K. Barsky, who had formed a medical corps to aid anti-Franco troops during the Spanish Civil War, organised, in 1942, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee to help loyalists in refugee camps in France. In 1946, HUAC demanded to see the organisation's records as part of its attempts to root out domestic communism. Barsky refused arguing that making public the names of refugees would endanger their families back in Spain. Congress held him in contempt and convicted him at trial.<sup>90</sup>

In conclusion we have seen that the American Catholic Church attacked the theme of war with a fiery passion. World War I was used to promote the idea of the American priest, acting and speaking on behalf of all US citizens, as a leader both physically and spiritually. In fact, in this motif the enemy was an ambiguous foreigner or "Other" who threatened the sanctity and prosperity of the America ideal. Though the enemy remained somewhat unspecified, the American superman priest did not. The priest was compassionate, patient and softly spoken but always in command of a tremendous authority, which was used directly to protect not the Vatican or an abstract idea of salvation in heaven but America and Americans. In fact, the priest was willing to

sacrifice himself to protect the US. The spectre of communism was, contrarily, deliberately specified as a clear and present danger to both the Catholic and American ways of life (which were themselves promoted as interchangeable). The policy of American Catholic cultural producers was in effect to "deny", at least to some extent, communism, as they had with abortion and homosexuality (indeed communism was thought to promote the above concepts). This did not mean that communism was ignored per se in US cinema but rather those depictions of circumstances, themes or ideas that may be interpreted as conducive to the spread of communism were either not treated or modulated so that the status quo was portrayed as the only true defender of the people. In fact, American Catholic cultural producers could rarely bring themselves either to say or write the word "communism", using instead a number of blunt synonyms.

Though it may have been expected, one does not see the same treatment afforded to Nazism. In fact, considered as it was an international solution to communism, Nazism was, also to some extent, encouraged in popular culture, or at least it was encouraged in comparison to communism. This changed significantly with the onset of World War II. Though a full discussion of World War II is beyond our remit, the onset of war and its initial prosecution were clearly, thematically speaking, the last throes of the long 1930s, representing its metamorphosis into the so-called war years. Anti-Nazi films became the norm as were pro-Soviet representations, however distasteful it may have been to the American Catholic Church. This was accepted by the American Catholic Church only because of its belief in Americanism, or, rather, its commitment to the creation of a "oneness" in popular culture, though it does suggest that the American Catholic Church was not an all-powerful hegemonic force whose myths were unquestionably "taken" by the public, which this study has never claimed should be stated. However, despite the political necessity for generating something approaching sympathy towards their Soviet ally the same courtesy was not extended to domestic communism, which remained a great and terrible evil, beyond our period of discussion up to and including the modern day.<sup>91</sup>

## CHAPTER 4

# THE TEMPORAL WORLD

We have examined how American Catholic cultural producers depicted their institution and values in popular culture; this final chapter constitutes a discussion on how the American Catholic Church sought to control the representations of themes that we might best describe as belonging to the secular or temporal world. This was a theme that greatly preoccupied our protagonists as demonstrated in a letter to Will Hays from Archbishop McNicholas written in 1934. "One recognises," the clergyman asserted, "that there are legitimate dramatic values in *life*, affording themes of proper and profound interest."<sup>1</sup> Naturally, this could be a broad enough remit to compel us to examine every facet of materialism. So as to provide focus to the discussion we shall limit the themes to four that were essential to the socio-cultural, economic and legal development of the United States during the period in question. Consequently, we shall feature here investigations into how the American Catholic Church sought to represent race, including anti-Semitism and immigration, particularly from the historically Catholic nations of Italy and Ireland, crime and criminality and the notion of science as sin. We shall begin, however, by revisiting a theme that we have seen recur throughout this book; a merging of American Catholicism and patriotism designed to engender into popular culture a Catholic-infused form of Americanism. Indeed, the common assumption would remain that religious institutions, particularly in the United States, where a separation between Church and State had been formalised in the constitution, would seek to



represent themselves as independent groups solely beholden to their own different, separate or higher doctrines.

We have partially problematised this assumption in the preceding chapters. We will see a further erosion of conventional wisdom when we look closer into the theme of Americanism via the lens of citizenship, race and belonging.<sup>2</sup> Johnson has argued that "Rome viewed Catholicism in the United States as a 'church of immigrants', its primary task being the preservation of the laity's faith, in a hostile atmosphere in a culture dominated by Protestants and Jews."<sup>3</sup> Certainly, Johnson is accurate when he describes the American Catholic Church's sense that they were in a state of siege. However, rather than viewing themselves as 'behind enemy lines' where their ambition would be merely to survive, the American Catholic Church, through a Jesuitical conception of their environment, arguably understood themselves as a sort of coloniser that would incorporate elements of the "indigenous"<sup>4</sup> culture into its own philosophy so as to better incorporate the essential elements of itself into the "indigenous". This was not exactly a new policy. Early Christianity consumed numerous aspects of rival philosophies into its own polity so as to better proselytise the masses. Examples included the appropriation of the Egyptian sun god Ra, often represented as a golden disc, into the iconography of the heavenly angels, wherein the golden disc became a halo. In another example, the Celtic myth of Brig, the mother goddess, was turned into the Catholic Saint Brigid and of course most famously sites of former pagan worship soon had churches built atop them, the Catholic church, Santa Maria sopra Minerva (literally meaning Santa Maria on top of Minerva) in Rome being the most obvious example.

We have seen this theme in the representation of the superman priest. In fact, in films such as *Boys' Town* songs were used as contemporary hymns so as to better fuse Catholicism and Americanism. In *Boys' Town on Parade*, itself a quasi-militaristic sentiment, the lyrics proclaimed that,

In Boys' Town we want to stay  
With voices ringing and flag unfurled  
Sitting on top of the world

The key theme here is the mention of unfurled flags which serves to create the impression that Tracy's priest is not only a Catholic patriarchal figure to the boys in his care but also a proud and dutiful American citizen. This theme was further developed in a scene where after offering Catholic compassion to a disabled man, Tracy speaks in awe of "Another man who was crippled a long time ago but overcame his difficulties to become president". This was an obvious reference to FDR who was primarily confined to a wheelchair as a result of childhood polio. This connection between priestliness and public office was echoed in the review by *Variety*, which spoke of Tracy's character as a man with "faith and guts", who helped abandoned boys "along the road to worthy manhood and citizenship".<sup>5</sup> That is to say, the American Catholic Church did not simply promote itself as the defender of American ideals but sought to equate itself with a legal definition of an American citizen.

It was not only superman priests and religious figures *per se* that were represented as the Catholic protectors of American legality. Also promoted were those figures that we might call "secular saints". These were historical, or temporal, individuals depicted as Catholic-like martyrs whose actions and sacrifices had helped form and protect the United States. Chief among these secular saints was Abraham Lincoln.<sup>6</sup> The entire myth of Lincoln as an American citizen, arguably as the First American, is awash with Catholicised language and iconography. Indeed, Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, 1865, and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC (built at the beginning of the twentieth century), which Scott describes as a place of "theological contemplation... A place to seek sanctuary and find inspiration",<sup>7</sup> receives around three million visitors a year.<sup>8</sup> David Chidester has written of the representation of Lincoln as a religious figure. He states that through his public speeches, Lincoln established his quasi-religious public image himself. "... Weaving together the sacred texts of the Bible and the Declaration of Independence (as he did in his second inaugural speech) [Lincoln] set a type of exemplary model for religious experience in American culture religion."<sup>9</sup> This "exemplary model" encouraged the merging of Lincoln's personality with that of biblical heroes, or in Catholic director Frank Capra's

words, "men to match anyone's mountain". According to Capra, Lincoln was like those other "Gee whizzers", such as Moses, David, Peter and Paul who acted as God's instrument on Earth, performing miracles and making huge personal sacrifices for the greater good.<sup>10</sup>

Glen E. Thurow has elaborated on how Lincoln's speeches merged his own public image with that of biblical heroes. The Gettysburg Address, Thurow argues, was purposely infused with "Biblical cadences". Indeed, the most famous line in the address was "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth."<sup>11</sup> Thurow explains that such passages deliberately promoted the "theme of birth, death and rebirth..." He continues that, "the overtones of the dedication of the nation to equality suggest the dedication of a child to God in baptism, and in the testing of that nation that suggest the testing of religious faith."<sup>12</sup> Historian Louis A. Warren has also argued that "Beside the Sermon on the Mount, in human appreciation, has been placed Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg, Americans have celebrated the words spoken at Gettysburg."<sup>13</sup> That is, the civil war, and Lincoln's role in it, was represented, first by Lincoln and then by successive cultural producers, as a biblical struggle between good and evil. A struggle that would again decide whether the "self evident" principles that "all men are created equal" would survive or be forever extinguished. Lincoln's words, victory in the civil war and death were thus depicted as a crucial battle for the values and laws the American establishment claimed to represent: universal freedom for all mankind. Thus, Lincoln's life struggles came ultimately to be represented as remarkably similar to those of Christ.

Lincoln as a secular saint was represented in popular culture in two ways. Firstly, there were overt glorifications of the Lincoln story. The Catholic director John Ford's 1939 film *Young Mister Lincoln* most thoroughly conveyed this. The plot covered Lincoln's formative years, his education as a lawyer and his first, though fictional, case: in which he defended two brothers wrongfully accused of another man's murder. In other words, it focused on Lincoln's defence of American law. Lincoln was portrayed as a man with tremendous potential who nonetheless had himself to acquire the simple, plain and honest virtues

of the American Catholic Church. Lincoln's final acquisition of these values was represented by an emotional epiphany in which he reduced the American way of life to a simple and plain equation: good versus evil. While studying to become a lawyer, the Lincoln character exclaims aloud, "By jing! That's all there is to it: right and wrong. Maybe I should take up this legal thing." However, the film also required Lincoln to display physical as well as intellectual strength. In one scene he confronts a lynch mob: putting his foot up against the log they are using for a battering ram against the jailhouse door, Lincoln displays his "man of the people" virtues by petitioning the mob on its own level. He first appeals to their macho impulses by offering to "lick any man here", then he delivers a speech that soothes their rage and leaves them feeling irresolute. "Dontcha wanna put that log down now, boys?" he asks, "Ain't it getting' a mite heavy?"

The film's reviews further elaborated on and, moreover, perpetuated the Lincoln myth. The review from *Variety* described the film not simply as a biography of a "great man", but also as a "reaffirmation of the democratic principles that govern American civil liberties".<sup>14</sup> On June 3, 1939, *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote that "Here is 'Honest Abe', tall, lean, inscrutable and brooding in his quiet strength of character and purpose, two fisted when needs be and gentle as a kitten in sympathetic moments, methodical but sound in his simple analysis of law and life..."<sup>15</sup> That is to say, the earthy Lincoln's attitude and behaviour was interchangeable with that of the superman priest.

Secondly, the Catholic film director Frank Capra devised a method of embodying the language, ideas and iconography of the Lincoln myth within contemporary figures. These characters were partly Lincoln-analogies but were mostly employed as Catholicised reincarnations of Lincoln.<sup>16</sup> This was made evident in *Meet John Doe* (1940). In the film, a reporter, Ann Mitchell, writes a polemic, published in her newspaper's letters page, in which she assumes the role of an unemployed "John Doe" who has threatened suicide in protest of social ills. The letter becomes so popular with the public that Mitchell is required to ghost-write more and the newspaper is forced to hire John Willoughby (establishment hero Gary Cooper) to impersonate "Doe" at public appearances. Each week Mitchell

writes another "Doe" letter in which she appeals to the better side of humanity (the simple, honest and plain virtues of Abraham Lincoln, such as Catholic charity) in order to help American society recover from the depression. The John Doe phenomenon grows so popular that John Doe clubs are established where citizens can meet and discuss John Doe's values. In other words, quasi-secular or "temporal" churches are established where believers can congregate and share their "faith" in citizenship and the law. John Doe is even quoted in the paper as saying that "the meek shall inherit the earth when the John Does start loving their neighbours."

However, Willoughby soon learns that the paper's owner is planning to hijack the popular "John Doe" movement to further his own selfish political ambitions. Faced with his impotence at preventing the virtues of Lincoln from being manipulated and racked with (somewhat Catholicised) guilt over his part in the affair, Willoughby attempts the suicide that "John Doe" originally promised. Symbolically, he does so on Christmas Eve. Before he can go through with it, a group of loyal believers catch up with Willoughby and plead with him to reconsider. As the crowd do so they merge together the identities of "Doe", Lincoln and Christ. "You don't have to die to keep the John Doe idea alive," Willoughby is told. "Somebody already did that once! The first John Doe!" This theme was further promulgated by the film's publicity. Its slogan read, "He's one man in a million and a million men in one."

The reviews for the film made these themes even more explicit. On March 13, 1941, *Film Review* described it as advocating "Christian philosophy and wordy patriotism".<sup>17</sup> Moreover, on 11 March, 1941, *Look* magazine wrote that "It is a story of democracy resolved into essential ethics and simple honesty, good neighborliness, brotherly love and something very much like religion." The *New York Herald Tribune* saw the film as a "provocative statement of the American way of life" and a promotion of the "Christian-democratic ideal". The *New York Times* believed the film offered "reassurance and faith", which was echoed by *Variety* when it printed that the film glorified "the meek, the generous, the hopeful, the commonplace John Doe whom the Lord loves".<sup>18</sup>

Robert Sklar perfectly encapsulated the cultural intentions of the film when he wrote that, "In the process of turning John Doe into

a Christ figure, Capra transformed the myth of the American hero into a defence of Christian morality. No longer is Shangri-La, the Tibetan retreat of James Hilton's novel, *Lost Horizon*, the sanctuary for the Christian ethic: it has become the United States."<sup>19</sup> The one modification I would offer here is that though the American Catholic Church carefully developed and promoted a social moral code compatible with Protestantism it was nevertheless designed to centralise American Catholicism to the American experience and to promote legal notions of citizenship as irreducible from an acceptance of the American Catholic Church.

Another outstanding example of the creation of a secular saint was the film, *Knute Rockne: All American* (1940). The picture told the "real life" story of a patriotic American Catholic who fulfilled the melting pot myth by having been born in Norway. The story depicts Knute's rise as a Catholic scholar at Notre Dame University before becoming a star quarterback and finally a legendary football team coach. The role was once again played by Pat O'Brien who, according to *Variety*, "gives a vigour, dimension and spiritual" quality to the film which "was in every sense all American".<sup>20</sup> This notion was further buttressed by the review in the *Motion Picture Daily* (October 7, 1940), which argued that "the spirit of Americanism glows through the picture".<sup>21</sup> This film combines the talent of a recognisably American Catholic actor (O'Brien) with the true-life tale of a gloriously heroic and virile American Catholic and presents the final product as, to borrow a phrase, a preachment for patriotism, belonging and citizenship. Indeed, James Cagney had lobbied for the role of Knute, keen to break free of the gangster films with which he was never particularly comfortable. However, Cagney had signed a petition in favour of the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War and as such the Catholic Notre Dame University, which controlled many aspects of the production, refused to sanction his casting.<sup>22</sup>

In order to further ensure that the secular saint myth was engendered effectively, the film was forbidden by the PCA to take any license with its depiction of religious ceremonies. The film's original script called for a baptism scene in which the baby comically wet himself. On August 6, 1940, Breen wrote to Hays in which he stated that

"the business and dialogue suggesting that the baby has wet himself is not acceptable" because it insults the sanctity of Catholicism.<sup>23</sup> Even though the secular saint, like the superman priest, was a "good chap", earthy and humane, he could not be ridiculed as inappropriate laughter, so the American Catholic Church apparently held, would risk undermining his solemnity and gravitas.

It was not unusual for these secular saints to be sidekick characters who offered the hero a moral and physical imperative: an angel on the hero's shoulder as it were. Such examples included *The Mark of Zorro* (1940) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938). That is to say, the monks and friars who accompany and counsel Robin and Zorro served as the secular saint in such productions. These monks and friars may have been rotund and gluttonous but they gave succour and spiritual guidance to the superman hero (e.g. Zorro and Robin Hood). Moreover, like the superman priest, they were also actively engaged in, and citizens of, the temporal world. Indeed, in *The Mark of Zorro* it is the portly padre Ramone who encourages physical action against the oppressive and corrupt regime. "Sometimes you must fight fire with fire," he urges in a phrase thoroughly compatible with the American Catholic Church's interpretation of the *kulturkampf*. Moreover, he describes Zorro, who at one point in the film disguises himself as a monk, as "an angel with a fiery sword!" In the film's synopsis, presented to the PCA for appraisal, the character was further described as a "likeable, two fisted fellow who believes in action", which was further reinforced in a scene where Zorro and the padre defeat a squadron of highly trained soldiers fighting side by side.

The relationship between the superman hero and the spiritual advisor was also explored in the Errol Flynn film, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Friar Tuck is jovially mocked for his poor levels of physical fitness. "If this is poverty," Robin quips at the corpulent Tuck, "I'll gladly share it." However, the Catholic sidekick-character acts as a moral arbitrator justifying Hood's civil disobedience as the will of God. Furthermore, Hollywood's cultural producers entirely rewrote the role of the Catholic Church in the Robin Hood myth. No longer was Tuck the noble counter to the greedy Catholic Bishops who, in league with Prince John, were bleeding dry the people of the country. In fact, the Catholic Bishops

were completely removed from the story so that only the virtuous Tuck remained. Roland Leigh, the film's screenwriter, wrote that the reason any negative representations of religious individuals featured in the film were eschewed was because "...we have no desire to offend either the Catholic or Protestant Church of today."<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, the filmmakers were at pains to suggest that "there is no arraying of class against class".<sup>25</sup> A theme also promoted in the *Motion Picture Herald*, which stated on April 30, 1938, that "there is no hint or trace of social, political or economic preachment... but the hero is presented as attacking only the specific injustice, avarice and persecution practiced by a definite group of persons who happen, as does he, to be of noble birth".<sup>26</sup> Far from advocating communistic revolution, as the comments above attempt to deny, Zorro and Hood represent something entirely different. As noted, Hood is of noble birth as was Zorro (a Catholic Spanish landowner). These two citizens from the establishment of society fight on behalf of the people to eliminate Catholicised crimes (avarice for instance) so as to perfect the status quo, not to challenge it. In other words, these secular saints represented a new breed of hero designed to promote American Catholicism, the legal status quo and to reduce and deny the necessity for systemic change: the rebel conservative.

As a counterpoint to Friar Tuck it is worth considering the contribution of Una O'Connor. A very well-known supporting character actress of the period, O'Connor was highly active in the Catholic Stage Guild in England before relocating to Hollywood in 1932. She carved out a niche portraying various duennas. Indeed, she habitually played the role of moral guardian to the various female objects of affection pursued by Errol Flynn in such pictures as *Robin Hood*, *Sea Hawk* and *Don Juan*. Her performances were almost always gently, pleasingly comic yet O'Connor never failed to represent the upright guardian of moral probity. Consequently, as Tuck and Ramone functioned to justify the actions of the heroic supermen as legitimate and God's will, so the characters portrayed by O'Connor served to 1) ensure that the heroic superman conformed to traditional methods and values, that is to say Catholicised methods and values, of courting; and 2) remind the female love interest of the moral and appropriate way for a citizen-woman to behave in society.



An important facet in the shaping or construction of a sense of American citizenship was the incorporation, or at the least the addressing of, the issue of race and immigration. If we can agree that the American Catholic Church attempted to infuse its own version of Catholicism into American popular culture then it would not surprise us to learn that the political notion of "foreigners", which should be less important in a universal Church, were widely castigated by the American Catholic Church for being communists and perverts or, in short, un-American. Indeed, Breen described the French author Emile Zola, whilst working on a film version of *Nana*, as a "filthy Frenchman who grew rich writing pornographic literature".<sup>27</sup>

It was in the domestic sphere that the issue of race, and especially immigration, was of greater concern. It would not be unfair to assert that during the period in question there existed something to the effect of institutionalised racism within the United States. This most obviously applied to the Afro-American community. Barely a generation after the Emancipation Proclamation, blacks were still denied the basic rights of most white Americans: segregation was rife, the KKK at their most popular, black disenfranchisement the norm and the Jim Crow laws observed, especially in the South. A clear example was, of course, the Scottsboro case of 1931 in which nine black youths were accused of raping two white women. They were all convicted at a hasty trial held in a mob atmosphere and in which the jurors were entirely white. In regards to cinema, we have already mentioned *Birth of a Nation* (1915) which depicted, in the words of Gary D. Keller, "tender and sensitive Southern whites... [and] heroic Ku Klux Klansmen..." against "vicious and brutal blacks... and evil mulattoes, the result of the deplorable mixing of the races".<sup>28</sup> Consequently, by the 1930s blacks were represented on the screen in subservient positions, when they were represented at all.<sup>29</sup> The most famous example is perhaps Shirley Temple's tap-dancing servant Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. H.E. Wilson, vice-president of the Stuart Silver Fox Ranch made these sentiments abundantly clear when he wrote to Joseph Breen in August 1936.

We wish to further call attention to the picture "Bullets or Ballots" in which a negro woman appeared several times in the

film [albeit in a minor role] wearing a double silver fox scarf. We have no prejudice as far as coloured people are concerned, but you must realise the feeling of the white people of the South... Now, when the Southern women see a coloured woman wearing these silver foxes they drop them like poison. As far as coloured women are concerned we doubt if a dozen of them can or do wear silver foxes... Many of your white stars do wear silver foxes in your pictures and we do think that is wonderful advertising and profitable for us, and which is very much appreciated.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the Memphis Tennessee film censorship board banned a Hal Roach comedy because it featured a scene in which white and black children played together. "The South does not recognise social equality between the races," the board proclaimed, "even in children."<sup>31</sup>

In regards to the American Catholic Church the "outsider" racial prejudice most vocalised was not towards blacks (though the above firmly suggests that blacks were still victimised) but rather Jews. As a result, part of the American Catholic Church's *kulturkampf* was to "take control" of cultural production from Jews and prevent the representation of Jewish themes in popular culture. The reasons for this objective, and for their anti-Semitism, were manifold. Firstly, anti-Semitism was a particular feature in the Roman Catholic Church in general due to the belief that the Jews were "responsible" for the death of Christ. Secondly, unlike blacks who had been "well Christianised" by the 1930s, Jews came with their own faith that involved separate practices and a different language. The Jewish faith has historically also put education as a central tenet and therefore ran into conflict in an area the Catholic Church considered its jurisdiction. Moreover, and again unlike blacks, Jews were in positions of economic and social significance throughout the United States and especially within the cinema. In short, they were seen as rich, influential and different. As a point of fact, they were considered to be much, much worse.

The American Catholic Church was also of the opinion that communism and Judaism were often working in tandem against the US. In the Jesuit newspaper *America* an editorial published on May 7, 1938, read, "If more Jewish spokesmen reiterated opposition to communism

and fewer Jewish people joined the communist ranks, the American people would on this point, have a kindlier feeling towards the Jew."<sup>32</sup> These sentiments existed despite the fact that the majority of Jewish studio bosses actually held rather conservative political opinions. Louis Mayer for example supported Herbert Hoover for the presidency and helped to undermine Upton Sinclair's gubernatorial campaign by claiming that he wanted to establish a Soviet-style system inside California, should he win.

Anti-Semitism was in fact as indelible a part of the American Catholic philosophy as a watermark is to legal tender. It is worth asking why Jews, given their positions inside Hollywood, elected to promote Christianity, specifically that of the American Catholic Church, as we have seen throughout this monograph, when they arguably had the means and opportunity to promote their own faith? That is to say, why did they cede cultural supremacy to the American Catholic Church? Many Jews, and certainly those in Hollywood, considered themselves 100 percent American citizens, which meant, of course, primarily being Christian and not Jewish. Moreover, as we have seen, being Christian in the US during the long 1930s meant a certain understanding towards, acceptance of and participation in the American Catholic Church. The fact that so many Jews Americanised their names is evidence of this.

In addition to their American citizenship, Hollywood's Jewish producers also had box office and business concerns which helped to ensure that overtly Catholic-Christian values and not Jewish values were promoted. The American population was overwhelmingly Christian. In the years leading up to the 1930s, while there were 20 million Catholics in the US, only 1.5 million Jews were officially resident in the United States and they were mostly located in the New York region.<sup>33</sup> Although the 20 million American Catholics comprised approximately only one-fifth of the US' religious population they were heavily located in the major cities, including New York but also Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Detroit.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the American Catholic Church had a stronger presence in the vital, urbanised centres of the United States than any other American religious group, including the Jews, and as such possessed considerably

more economic clout as potential cinema audiences, which would provide leverage enough for the cinematic Jewish community, rich but geographically isolated in LA, to acquiesce to the demands of American Catholic cultural producers.

Finally, and most convincingly, the Hollywood Jewish community may have promoted overtly Christian or American Catholic values because while not terribly concerned, perhaps, with the rise of Nazism or international fascism they would have been extremely concerned about the rise and extent of anti-Semitism within the United States. Therefore, they may have wanted to suppress any overt pro-Judaism, or Zionism, so as to avoid the perceived, or feared, wrath of the non-Jewish (and deeply sceptical) religious majority. Indeed, during the long 1930s of all the religious groups in the United States, the American Catholic Church was the most anti-Semitic and, as we have seen, the most organised and militant. They were also the religious institution most ardently convinced that the Jewish immigrants who primarily managed Hollywood were immoral fifth columnists. As a corollary, it was the American Catholic Church that most passionately argued for power to be removed from these cultural producers. That is to say, more than any other religious group in the US, the American Catholic Church considered the American way of life to be under threat from Jews, and they were the religious institution that became most actively involved in the making of popular culture. For example, in 1933, the Bishop of Los Angeles, John Cantwell wrote to his colleague the Archbishop of Cincinnati, John T. McNicholas, asking him what could be done to remove the Jewish influence from Hollywood. "Promises," he told McNicholas, "made to us by the Jews... will amount to very little."<sup>35</sup> Cantwell subsequently hired the services of a lawyer, Joseph Scott, to represent his case to the Hollywood studios. In 1933, Scott held a dinner meeting with the studio heads where he described movie-making Jews as "disloyal Americans."<sup>36</sup> Cantwell also spoke at the function where he asserted boldly that if "the Jewish executives" wanted "to keep the screen free from offensiveness" they could but had simply chosen not to.<sup>37</sup> Cantwell's speech was written by the Catholic-mole-in-Hollywood himself, Joseph Breen and subsequently appeared in the February issue of *Ecclesiastical Review* (of which McNicholas ordered

1,000 copies to be delivered to churches nation-wide).<sup>38</sup> In fact, Joseph Breen made the above sentiment abundantly clear when he argued that the nation was being "debauched by Jews" who represented "the scum of the earth" and "dirty lice".<sup>39</sup>

This was not idle banter but actual policy. Indeed, as Glen Jeansonne stated, the 1930s represented the "high tide" of American anti-Semitism.<sup>40</sup> Around the same time as the American Catholic Church created the League of Decency, the Episcopal Committee, the Catholic body responsible for organising the operating specifics of the Legion, issued a statement which asserted that "The pesthole that infects the entire country with its obscene and lascivious moving pictures must be cleaned and disinfected."<sup>41</sup> Taking into account the above words of Joseph Breen, this language, referring to pests and infection, was clearly directed towards Hollywood's Jewish population utilising, as it does, classical anti-Semitic imagery. The fact that such views were promoted as the Legion was conceived may well have served to increase the desire of Hollywood Jews to promote less Jewish and more Christian-American, specifically American Catholic, themes. Moreover, Reverend Wilbur Fiske Crafts, as early as 1922, called on citizens to "rescue the motion picture from the hands of the devil and 500 un-Christian Jews".<sup>42</sup> What is important here is that in addition to aligning the Protestant Church with the Catholic in regards to anti-Semitism, the Protestant Church were also asking, if not pleading, for someone or institution to take the lead in wrestling control of cultural production from the Jews, further legitimising American Catholic efforts in cultural production. Of course, the American Catholic Church was only too happy to oblige and, as we have discussed previously, were applauded by the Protestant Church for having done so. Consequently, one can readily appreciate why the cultural producing Jewish community, in the face of such raw hatred, chose to follow the American Catholic Church when opposing it may have elevated them onto a par with communism, homosexuality and abortion. They judged ultimately that it would be better to be controlled and supplicated than to be annihilated.

This is further supported by the fact that Jewish filmmakers and cultural producers, as we examined in the previous chapter, listened

to notable lay Catholic Joseph Kennedy when he gave a speech to the top 30 power brokers in Hollywood at a specially arranged lunch at the Warner Brothers studios, on 13 November, 1939. He encouraged the studio heads to "stop making anti-Nazi pictures or using the film medium to promote or show sympathy to the cause of the 'democracies' versus the 'dictators'." He told the gathered audience that Hitler liked Hollywood movies and wanted the US to keep making them but, he added, the studio heads were "going to have to get those Jewish names off the screen".<sup>43</sup> Hollywood producers did this without argument. Indeed, as Steven Carr points out, "By the late 1930s, the overt representations of the Jew in mainstream American film had all but evaporated."<sup>44</sup> Evidence for this can be found in the Production Code File for the film *Scarface* in which the Hays Office told producers that, "the lawyer, Epstein, should not be so pronouncedly Jewish, if at all".<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the 1937 film *The Life of Emile Zola* features a depiction of the Dreyfus affair and yet the word "Jew" was not uttered once.<sup>46</sup>

As the American Catholic Church was clearly interested in race and citizenship issues we might expect that characters of Italian extraction would be somewhat romanticised in popular culture. After all, the seat of the international Catholic Church was Rome, its language was Latin and, moreover, seeming as the American Catholic Church had effectively supplanted Jews, and Protestants were apparently following the Catholic's lead, the path was cleared for American Catholic cultural producers to depict race and ethnicity in the manner of their own choosing. However, American Catholic cultural producers held specifically pro-American sensibilities that were not necessarily shared by Rome. Indeed, in 1937 the Vatican Secretariat of State asked Archbishop McNicholas if the Legion of Decency's list of recommendations, which the Vatican actually considered a touch liberal, could be brought into line with "Italian sensibilities". Politely, the Legion declined.<sup>47</sup> One of its reasons was that American and Italian "sensibilities" were, naturally, different. That is to say, the US variant was more patriotically or temporally influenced. Another was that the American Catholic Church, as we discussed in the introduction, was primarily influenced by Irish DNA rather than Italian.

Between 1840 and 1896, of the 1,407 priests trained at All Hallows College, near Dublin, 596 were posted to the United States, over a third.

Moreover, in the 1880s, the Knights of Columbus was fully established in the US. This was an Irish-dominated fraternal organisation for middle-class American Catholics to establish an aura of civic respectability and responsibility. By 1900, two Irish Catholics, Edward D. White and Roger Taney, had been on the Supreme Court and Irish immigrants, more generally, enjoyed a rough economic parity with the white Protestant majority. In short, the Irish Catholics were no longer the "foreigners". In the words of Johnson, Irish integration represented "an extraordinary achievement that would have been unimaginable without brilliant ecclesiastical leadership".<sup>48</sup> It was, moreover, this leadership that established and entrenched Catholic educational and welfare programmes, as discussed in the introduction, which further legitimised Irish immigration.

Italians on the other hand were not nearly as accepted in the polity of the United States. Between 1891–1920, 3–8 million Italians arrived in the US, an enormous number. However, they arrived too late to influence the initial formation of the Catholic Church in the US, the leadership of which was therefore almost exclusively Irish. Secondly, language was also a barrier to acceptance. Whereas the Irish spoke English, the Italians largely did not. Indeed, it was not until 1954 that an Italian-American was appointed to a US bishopric (Joseph Maria Pernicone) and not until 1982 that an Italian-American (Joseph Bernardin) became an Archbishop.

There were in 1900, moreover, only 60 Italian priests inside the US and in 1908, 85 percent of Italian children living in the US attended public and not Catholic school. In Chicago, seven out of ten Irish Catholic parishes had their own school whereas that number was only one out of ten in Italian parishes. In 1917, B.J. Reilly, pastor of Nativity Church in New York, wrote to the Archbishop John M. Cardinal Farley. "The Italians," he wrote, "are not a sensitive people like our own. When they are told that they are about the worst Catholics that ever came to this country they don't deny or resent it."<sup>49</sup> So alien were the Italian immigrants considered by the American Catholic Church that they were often compelled to worship in the Church basement whilst the Irish-Americans enjoyed the privilege of the chapel.

In other words, it was the Irish Catholic immigrant who formed and initially controlled the Catholic Church in the US. Moreover, Irish

Catholic immigrants had reached a level of social and economic acceptability whereby they were now considered fully American. This citizenship was worn as a badge of honour seeming as it represented their freedom from oppression (of the religious, social and economic kind) from the British. Conversely, the Italian Catholics were understood as degenerate by other Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Consequently, they remained outsiders or "foreign".

We see representations of these good Catholics and sinful Catholics most clearly expressed in popular culture through the crime film genre. Naturally, the crime genre, gangsterism most especially, was considered highly problematic by the PCA and the Legion. After all, the tenets of the Production Code and of American Catholic doctrine forbade the glorification of crime and criminality. The initial popularity in the early, pre-PCA and Legion, 1930s of gangster films was a problem for the establishment more widely because in the early incarnations of the genre the gangster was perceived, as he was in reality, to threaten the status quo. In fact, according to Phillip Brandt George, by 1935 the US Justice Department estimated that criminals outnumbered carpenters four to one, grocers by six to one and doctors by an astonishing 20 to one.<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Munby has written on this point, arguing that "As a new screen idol, the gangster was perceived by an embattled Anglo-Saxon hegemony as the most conspicuous example of twin modern evils: the corrupting force of mass culture on the one hand and the culture of the immigrant or 'new' American, on the other."<sup>51</sup>

In "civilisation" gangsterism seized public attention unlike any other form of criminality and gangsters themselves were held by the establishment to be public enemy number one.<sup>52</sup> This was reflected in the number of gangster movies produced. In 1930 (before the PCA and the Legion of Decency), Hollywood made nine. The following year that number was almost trebled to 26. The production cycle hit its peak in 1932 when 28 gangster films were made.<sup>53</sup> In the months prior to the establishment of the Legion of Decency and the Production Code Administration, and throughout the following years, fewer gangster films were produced. In 1933, for example, the number fell to 15.<sup>54</sup> Although the specific number of these productions declined the



gangster movie remained a significantly popular and influential genre. As late as 1946 gangster films were the third-highest grossing movies after dramas and musicals, of which many more films were made.<sup>55</sup>

That the gangster might become a folk hero worried many invested with power and public responsibility. In October 1931, New York Police Commissioner Mulrooney was asked by the Hays Office to comment on the film *Scarface*. He dismissed the film as "a gangster picture and nothing else. The gangster is glorified up to the very last minute..."<sup>56</sup> In February 1931, Will Hays received a letter from an anonymous member of the public which further expressed these fears. "You are responsible for the morality of our films," the letter read, "Such pictures as *Little Caesar* and other gang pictures are more destructive to the morality of the people and the civilization of our country than any other single force today."<sup>57</sup>

The real problem, and one inherent in the issue of American gangsterism itself, was less that the gangster and his vice and violence were being publicly glorified but, rather, that the existence of gangsters, and the representations of his lifestyle, actually highlighted a contradiction in the establishment's American ideology. What the gangster, or the gang, sought was not the destruction or subversion of society (as communism did). Rather, he wanted to reach the top of it for the gangster's ambition and success (such as it might have been) were a distorted definition of the American dream. After all, the gangster had risen from rags to riches, he had used nothing but the gifts God gave him and ruthless *individualism* in order to fully exploit every *opportunity* that came his way. Similarly, Shindler has described the gangster genre as "a uniquely American concept". Moreover, he points out how the plots for films such as *Little Caesar* and *Scarface* were not fictional but were taken directly from the newspapers. Indeed, the lead character from *Scarface* was called Camonte, which was phonetically similar to Capone – the real-life figure on whom the character was based. Even more explicitly, the nickname "Scarface" was actually one by which Capone was known popularly.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, real-life gangsterism was perceived to be an inescapable part of American daily life. Shadoian referred to America in this time as "a place of perpetual and violent conflict".<sup>59</sup> In the wake of the murder of Charles Lindbergh's baby and the crimes of Dillinger, Baby

Face Nelson and Bonnie and Clyde, kidnapping, robbing a national bank and crossing state lines to avoid arrest (all associated with gangsterism) became federal crimes.<sup>60</sup>

From the mid-1930s, visual representations of the gangster began to change in order to deal with the ideological contradiction that earlier gangster films had highlighted. The re-employment of the gangster film also utilised American Catholic views on Irish and Italian race/ethnicity and citizenship. In fact, the American Catholic Church solved the problem of the gangster film by reformatting its themes along ethnic and citizenship lines. That is to say, in popular culture the "new" gangster film saw the Irish Catholic presented as a bastion of American citizenship and its noble defender. We have already seen this theme in evidence through such films as *Angels with Dirty Faces* wherein Father Jerry Connolly was depicted as something of a gangster hunter. We have also detailed his acts of superhuman strength and resolve (both moral and physical). What is also important to note was how the PCA were at lengths to portray Connolly as both Catholic and *Irish-American*. In fact, not only does he speak with a soft Irish brogue but Breen also demanded that throughout the film the children under the characters' care "address the priest as 'Father Connolly' instead of 'Jerry'", thereby highlighting both his ethnicity and his calling.<sup>61</sup> Respect for the character as an Irish-American Catholic was further underscored in a letter from Breen to producer Jack Warner, in which he states, "p.15: This scene in the confessional seems to us to be a disrespectful presentation of a sacred religious practice, and therefore objectionable under the code".<sup>62</sup> The sequence in question featured Connolly talking with the gangster Rocky in a playful manner; as such it would, so the PCA believed, make a mockery of the sanctity of confession. Perhaps most illuminating was the fact that in the original treatment for the film the hero was plainly Rocky with Connolly only in the script in any meaningful way at the beginning and at the end. On January 19, 1938, Breen told Warner Brothers to "avoid any flavor of making a hero and sympathetic character of a man who is at the same time shown to be a criminal, a murderer and a kidnapper". By September 9, 1938, the script had been thoroughly reconceived so that, as Breen later noted, "Jerry [Father Connolly] is the hero".<sup>63</sup>

The film's reviewers comprehended and further embraced the theme of Irish-American Catholic heroism. Martin Quigley's *Motion Picture Herald* described the picture's representation as a "document of truism" and lauded its "unquestioned ability in the field of cinematic criminology".<sup>64</sup> An article by Jean Morienva, published in the French newspaper *Choiser*, remarked that, "It is interesting to see the American cinema thus create fine portraits of priests... The heroism of this priest is a beautiful thing."

Another example we have encountered before was Spencer Tracy as Father Flanagan in the 1938 film, *Boys' Town*. When he joins his elder brother's criminal gang it seems that the errant boy Marsh has run away for good. Flanagan refuses to allow Marsh's potential to be corrupted and with the assistance of the boys under his charge, he captures the gang and finally earns Marsh's respect and loyalty. Important to note here is that his accent, name, look and wistful 'isms' clearly denote Tracy's Father Flanagan to be an Irish-American. This sort of glorification was not limited solely to cinematic priests and did not emerge in the late 1930s from out of a vacuum. In the 1931 gangster film, *Little Caesar*, the villain's evil is juxtaposed by the heroic Irish-American Catholic police detective, Sergeant Tom Flaherty, who wears his ethnicity and faith as if it were a bulletproof vest. Of the film, Jason Joy wrote that the "picture should leave a certain moral lesson, the details that give the audience the opportunity to contrast good and evil, right and wrong". In short, the above films gave accent and iconography to the abstract concepts of good and evil: good was an Irish-American Catholic.

Criminal evil was, however, also portrayed as connected to American Catholicism and its sentiments towards race, citizenship and belonging. Whereas the Irish Catholic immigrant had become a dyed-in-the-wool American, the Italian Catholic, reflecting "official" American Catholic opinion regarding Italians, was represented as the criminal. American Catholic cultural producers promoted the idea that as religious faith helped make the Irish Catholic a superman so the rejection of religious faith, or the worshipping of an off-kilter, or even heretical, branch of Catholicism (which we shall refer to as "lapsed") helped to transform one into a villain. Like Lucifer, the Italian-American gangster

was represented as a kind of "fallen angel".<sup>65</sup> As a child, before he had embraced a life of crime, the gangster was represented as a pious and optimistic Catholic. That is, he was a faithful servant of God. However, once he had become a fully matured, professional criminal (or in the parlance of the genre, a "made man") he became a lawless, sinful enemy of the people who was distinctly and recognisably Italian. In short, by abandoning Catholicism the gangster had also abandoned the honesty and innocence of childhood and in its place he had adopted hubris and violence. As Martin and Ostwalt stress, "Hollywood was clearly happiest when it arrayed true believers against clearly villainous heathens, huns and pagans..."<sup>66</sup> However, what they failed to note was that often the "true believer" and the "villainous heathen" would represent two halves of the same character. The "true believer" was the gangster's pre-criminal, American Catholic personality, represented or embodied often as an Irish immigrant, while the "villainous heathen" represented the Italian gangster's lapsed Catholic, criminal personality. Thus, the merger of Catholic teachings with the ostensibly temporal concept of race and citizenship was promoted as a moral tuning fork: an instrument used to test one's honesty and to what extent one's morality was in key with the social moral code.

One of the best examples was the 1931 film, *Little Caesar*. The film depicts the life of Edward G. Robinson's Rico Bandello, a career criminal who at a young age joins Sam Vettori's vicious gang. Rico proceeds to oust, double-cross and betray his rivals and superiors until he is the city's number one crime lord. Ultimately, it is his greed and vanity which lead to his downfall at the hands of Sergeant Tom Flaherty. These two enemies provide the film's moral/religious juxtaposition. Indeed, in the film, Rico is described as the "Catholic who has turned his back on the church", whereas the heroic policeman's Irish name and honest nature denote that he remains a dedicated believer. Furthermore, Rico's getaway driver Tony Passa decides to change his life of crime after his immigrant mother, herself a devout Catholic, implores him to recapture the sanctity and innocence of his youthful days in the church choir under the tutelage of the beloved Irish-American priest, Father McNeil. "You used to be such a good boy, Antonio. Remember when you sing in the church...?", she asks

him with her thick accent. "You in white. Remember? The church was beautiful. You a little boy with long hair. The tall big candles, the flowers..." As Tony prostrates himself at the church, begging for forgiveness and redemption, he is shot dead. The film's message is that Tony is appropriately punished for his life of crime with his own "death sentence"; a compensating moral value consistent with PCA sensibilities. In short, an eye for an eye. Importantly though, Tony is also assured forgiveness and a place in heaven because of his sincere repentance, whereas Rico, brutally gunned down by machine-gun fire, dies in agony, without forgiveness, wondering, "Mother of mercy! Is this the end of Rico?" Moreover, it is vital to note that Tony seeks forgiveness not only from the American Catholic Church but from an Irish-American priest and not an Italian.

In a review of the film, written on January 30, 1931, the *LA Evening Herald* described Rico as having "died like a rat under a splatter of eager whining bullets from a police machine gun."<sup>67</sup> It went on to profile the character's psychology. It wrote of "The strange ferment of ambition in Rico's soul, his utter vanity, his cold ferocity."<sup>68</sup> Rico was a villain because of his irreligious, animalistic and, ultimately, sinful ego. His fate was not portrayed as one which awaits a fictional or romanticised character. Rather, the entire film was promoted as a true representation of real life. In its review, the *LA Evening Herald* described the film as having "the un-staged vividness of the newsreel reporting."<sup>69</sup> *Little Caesar* set the model that representations of the lapsed Catholic gangster figure were to follow. Indeed, the film *Scarface*, made shortly after *Little Caesar*, continued to depict the vanity of its lapsed Italian Catholic gangster, Camonte, against the Catholic virtue of the policeman out to catch him. On June 3, 1931, the Hays Office's Jason Joy wrote a letter to the film's producers. In it he outlined the changes the PCA required to the script before it could be considered acceptable. "In the final scenes," Joy wrote, "Camonte should be shown as a cringing coward... there should be some evidence before the conclusion that Camonte is fundamentally a yellow dog..."<sup>70</sup>

Thus we may conclude that as American Catholicism caused men to be heroes so irreligion caused men to be villains. Moreover, we are

compelled to conclude that many gangster films embodied, along with a religious conflict, a racial conflict too. The general, though not exclusive, pattern seemed to promote the good Irish, thus American Catholic, priest or policeman, versus the bad Italian, thus lapsed Catholic, or "foreign", anti-American gangster. Though this was undoubtedly the screen policy of the time it did not reflect contemporary America with what we might refer to as acidic verisimilitude. That is to say, there was a considerable divide between culture and civilisation. Between 1820 and 1930, approximately 4.5 million Irish people immigrated to the United States,<sup>71</sup> while over the same period, approximately 4 million Italians immigrated.<sup>72</sup> Both ethnicities were largely concentrated along the east coast, particularly in cities such as New York and Boston. However, many of the Irish, who had the advantage of being native English speakers, became policemen, priests and firemen. Though these became the "profession d'entrée" for the Irish, it would be inaccurate to claim that gangsterism did not afflict the Irish-American community. Indeed, during prohibition, many Irish-Americans forged successful careers in bootlegging, not to mention gambling, and in some cases offered the emergent IRA succour. The Italian immigrants, especially from southern Italy, primarily found employment in extremely poor conditions doing low-paid, unskilled labouring. Therefore, in the US during the long 1930s, there was approximately the same number of Irish as there were Italian immigrants. They were also located largely in the same areas. Nevertheless, cultural producers exaggerated and re-enforced the pre-existing economic and social conditions and depicted the Irish as the law enforcers, both spiritually and temporally, and the Italians as the law-breakers, both spiritually and temporally.<sup>73</sup>

The liberal writer Robert E. Sherwood identified the emergence of these themes as early as 1932 and wrote of it an article entitled "Removing the Scar", which was published in *The Motion Picture Album*. He described the nascent Hays Office and the Production Code as "medieval muzzling".<sup>74</sup> Even more forthright was Giacomo de Martino, the Royal Italian Ambassador who, on June 3, 1932, penned an unflinching appraisal of the representation of Italian-American

Catholics to Frederick L. Herron, the Foreign Manager of the Motion Picture Production and Distribution of America organisation.

The whole production [of *Scarface*] gives the unmistakable impression that all crimes are absolutely and completely imported from abroad and especially Italy and that, once such a foreign element is eliminated, the problem of American criminality would be solved.<sup>75</sup>

The themes surrounding the representation of Italian-Americans hardly went unnoticed by actual Italian-Americans. Many Italian-American groups voiced their concern about the way their public image was being shaped by gangster films. In a telegram to Will Hays sent on July 20, 1932, Guido Orlando, the Executive Secretary of the Italian-American Women's Club, wrote,

Acting upon resolution adopted by the Italian-American Women's Club including the Executive Secretary hereby calls upon you to demand of Howard Hughes producer of the [gangster] picture quote *Scarface* quote that he deletes the Italian names attached to the character STOP Resolution brands picture as outrageous reflection upon entire Italian race STOP<sup>76</sup>

A resolution from *Il Progresso Italio Americano*, from July 1, 1931, reiterated the same motif. "These characters [Italian gangsters] are frequently depicted," the report stated, "in a manner and of a speech which holds them up to scorn, contempt and ridicule... There may be promoted toward one another among various racial groups that form the body of American citizenship, greater good-will, happiness and accord."<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, far from addressing their concerns the American Catholic cultural producers mocked such lamentations from the Italian-American community. In a seemingly straight-faced reply to *Il Progresso Italio Americano*, Will Hays wrote (June 29, 1931) that it was a "cardinal feature of policy on the part of the motion picture industry that every possible consideration for the sensibilities and feelings of every group our of population shall be reflected on the

screen",<sup>78</sup> except of course, Hays may well have added, and as we have seen, for Italians, Jews, blacks, women and homosexuals. Jason Joy was even more unflinching. After New York Mayor La Guardia, the nation's most prominent Italian-American public figure, criticised the cinematic representation of his ethnicity Joy wrote that "the only bad reaction [to gangster pictures depicting Italian-Americans as "fallen"] will be the stirring up of the Italians on other pictures... However, maybe we will be more truthful next time and make all the characters [of criminals] Italian..."<sup>79</sup>

This is not to argue that every significant figure inside the Hays Office, the PCA or the Legion advocated whole-heartedly the theme under discussion. One dissenting voice belonged to Dr Carlton Simon. Employed by the Hays Office and, later, the PCA, Simon was a psychologist whose function was to provide a report as to the potential psychological and emotional impact upon popular culture of Hollywood cinema. On June 1, 1931, after analysing the treatment for *Scarface*, Simon wrote that,

There is at present a great deal of Italian atmosphere in the names of various foods consumed and the use of personal names. The mother of the criminal is painted as a grasping virago, distinctly an Italian criminal type mother. All of these presentations would be highly objectionable to millions of Italians in this country. The mother should have been endowed with graceful virtues and the son painted as a black sheep. There was a fine opportunity lost in not having the mother, if the part was to be played by Italians, present to the son a dialogue telling him what the Italian race has done for posterity and that he, *Scarface*, was bringing odium and shame upon his entire race. This might remove some of the flood of adverse criticism that would otherwise be sure to arise.<sup>80</sup>

One can see the kernel of Simon's idea presented in the characterisation of Tony Passa's mother in *Little Caesar*. However, the role was still that of a barely literate simpleton who raised her son to be a criminal and required the heroic intervention of an Irish-American priest to reform her boy. In short, the character was still something of a



"foreign" grotesque. Indeed, despite the outpouring of dissatisfaction from the Italian-American community, the theme depicting Italian-American Catholics as inferior to Irish-American Catholics was maintained. Moreover, it is of interest to note that Simon, who featured prominently in the Hay Office's work during the early 1930s, was rarely utilised by the PCA later in the decade.

If further proof was required to illustrate that Italian-American Catholics were singled out for unfavourable representations, and presented not as citizens but as criminals, one only has to consider the 1930s sub-genre depicting industrial tycoons. In *Boom Town* (1940), Clark Gable plays the oil tycoon, "Big" John McMasters. In many ways, McMasters is equally as ruthless and individualistic as the Italian-American gangster. He is just as reckless and he is just as materialistic. The crucial difference is that McMasters' actions are designed in honour of the established legal and economic order whereas the gangsters' are outside of it. McMasters accepts and uses the system whereas the gangster, by being outside the system (both in terms of ethnicity and legality), runs parallel to it. Thus, he, perhaps inadvertently, promoted alternate means to the same ends (the fortune and influence of the American Dream) as the established order. Consequently, this alternate means threatened to undermine the system. The same argument is made within *Little Caesar*. When Rico dies at the end of the film, alone and in the street, it is in the shadow of a billboard advertising his childhood best friend, and former gang partner, Joe's theatre show. The billboard reads, "A laughing, singing, dancing success." Thus, Joe's lifestyle is equally as hedonistic and materialistic as Rico's and they both sought little else but fame and fortune, but Joe chose to do so within the law and Rico outside of it. It was this choice which literally damned Rico. Indeed, it should also be noted that Joe was played by Douglas Fairbanks Jr, an actor clearly not of Italian-American origins, whereas the Jewish Edward G. Robinson was made to appear as Latin as possible.

In the historiography, Munby argues that the reason the early gangster films were so loathed by the establishment was not only because of what they portrayed the gangster doing, or, really, how he did it, but who the gangster was. He was always poor and he was

always from immigrant stock. "In stigmatising the ethnic urban poor," Munby wrote, "as criminal, the gangster genre betrays its origins in a nativist discourse which sought to cast 'hyphenated' Americans as 'un-Americans' and in need of 'Americanisation'."<sup>81</sup> Jack Shadoian, on the other hand, argues that, "The gangster/crime film is a genre like pornography and the horror film held in contempt socially and intellectually not because it may corrupt and not because it is artistically inferior to other kinds of film but because it realises our dreams, exposes our deepest psychic urges."<sup>82</sup> While Munby's argument is broadly accurate, Shadoian's is ultimately unconvincing. Of course, people often harbour secret fantasies about living a wildly dangerous lifestyle but the issue was not that people secretly wanted to be violent killers. Interestingly, though he denies any significant effort to shape the social moral code on the part of the American Catholic Church, Shadoian's conception of humanity as one in which vile thoughts and violent urges are ever present, albeit underneath the surface, is one broadly consistent with the Catholic Church and its preaching of original sin, which is not to make any assumptions concerning the author but merely to point out an interesting irony. Meanwhile, though Munby is, as stated, broadly accurate in his description that it was the gangster's ethnicity in tandem with his violent illegality that caused the establishment, the PCA and the Legion to regard him as a problem, Munby does not make the crucial distinction which is at the centre of this argument: ethnicity itself was not a problem, after all, Irish-American Catholics were also hyphenated. Rather, it was an ethnicity (Italian) wholly distinctive from Irish and Anglo standards which also claimed possession of the same religious ideology that compelled American Catholic cultural producers to attempt so consistent and ruinous depictions of their character.

Criminality, citizenship and Catholicism were also portrayed by American Catholic cultural producers in genres and form separate to gangsterism. We can see promoted outside of gangster pictures the same dual theme consisting of the advocating of American Catholicism, through the use of non-denominational, generically "Christian" language and American legal institutions. Indeed, the Legion's catalogue of classifications provides a succinct

encapsulation of these motifs. The 1944 film *Apology for Murder* was classified "B" because it "tends to condone the unethical taking of the law into one's hands";<sup>83</sup> whilst 1945's *Bandits of the Badlands* also received a "B" due to its "sympathetic treatment of revenge".<sup>84</sup> However, revenge, which was condemned in the film above, is not strictly speaking outside of Catholic law. The pro-life stance of the Catholic Church, American or otherwise, would certainly censure and denounce the representation of murder however revenge, which does not specifically entail or require the taking of life, would not automatically be placed in the same category. After all, the bible speaks of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and much Catholic doctrine is entwined with the concept of punishment ranging from the expulsion from Eden to nineteenth century Catholic school discipline. Nevertheless, in the American conception of citizenship during the long 1930s the preservation of the institutionalised status quo was of paramount concern. As such, the American Catholic Church seemingly embraced the notion that any action outside of the legal framework of the United States, whether morally or perhaps spiritually justifiable, was not to be approved.

The final theme under discussion in regards to America Catholic cultural producers' representations of the temporal world is that of science as sin. Naturally, the conflict between science and religion had been burning for centuries. From Roger Bacon to Galileo, and many others besides, the Roman Catholic Church had understood as heresy the questioning of the established story of creation and the interpretation of the heavenly bodies. During the Inquisition's examination of the work of Galileo, Robert Cardinal Bellarmine argued that science was "a very dangerous thing likely not only to irritate all scholastic philosophers and theologians but also to harm the Holy Faith by rendering Holy Scriptures false".<sup>85</sup> Indeed, during the scientific revolution individuals such as Newton and Leibnitz came under very close scrutiny from Rome even though they saw their work as a way of explaining, and therefore better worshipping, the work of God (much as Galileo did). It was, in addition, their Protestantism that so irked the Vatican. Moreover, during the long 1930s the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was admonished by the Roman Catholic

Church for his investigations into cosmology and his formulation of the Omega Point theory, which posited that all matter in the universe is being literally pulled towards a final space, the Omega Point, at which time will end.<sup>86</sup> As such, one would not be surprised to find the American Catholic Church equally as condemning of science and scientific research. After all, the pursuit of empiricism conflicts with Catholicism's promotion of faith, and the rationalisation of the universe offered by science threatens to demystify the Mysteries of the religion. However, one must caveat this notion with an appreciation for the fact that during our period the United States was beginning to lead the world in scientific advancement. Evidence of this can be seen in the building of towering skyscrapers, electrification and, within less than a decade of our period, the construction of an atomic bomb. Would it not therefore be reasonable to argue that the American Catholic Church, so infused with and embracing of Americanism and US citizenship, as it seemed to be, also advocated the theme of scientific progress?

The evidence suggests that the American Catholic Church remained greatly sceptical towards science and did indeed equate it with sin. We can see this most clearly in the example of the 1937 film, *Birth of a Baby*. This was initially an instructional film made for doctors to show to their patients. Produced by the medical company Mead Johnson, it was designed to illustrate the development of a pregnancy from zygote to birth and was made with the assistance of five eminent obstetricians as well as Cornell University Medical School. Using the technique of patient-doctor discussions and accompanying diagrams (depicting the foetus' development), the film sought to correct many myths that existed among the general public concerning healthcare, diet and exercise during pregnancy. The finished product appeared so successful to Mead Johnson that they decided to release the film in national cinemas and donate the proceeds to the US Public Health Service and the US Children's Bureau.

The film, which served a distinct public service by informing expectant mothers of the realities and rigors of childbirth in a time before family planning clinics, drop-in centres and widely published literature, was considered quasi-pornographic by the Catholic

*Brooklyn Tablet* newspaper. Further, the Jesuit newspaper, *America* asked, "why is it that the purveyors of this type of product, who claimed to have a zealous regard for public health, never turned out pictures about indigestion or How to Protect Your Daughter from Tuberculosis but always foistered their sex-obsessed wares on people in some side street theatre or a burlesque house with all its concomitant seediness." Indeed, Dr Ignatius Bryne, a physician and a Legion of Decency representative for Brooklyn urged women to ignore such films because they attempted to satisfy "a sex-crazed clientele for thirty pieces of silver". Consequently, the Legion condemned the film arguing that it "was not suited to general exhibition in the theatre". McClafferty himself described the feature as discussing "a subject which all decent minded people regard as sacred, private and personal", adding that popular discourse on the science of childbirth posed "a threat to public morality". Monsignor PMH Wynhoven further argued that it invaded the sanctity of privacy and asked, "Why do doctors order the father-to-be to stand outside the maternity room of his own child's birth when any stranger could go see the film and 'ogle'?"<sup>87</sup>

Following the film's condemnation, *Life* magazine published a series of photographs taken from the movie that were designed to better inform the audience as to the process of childbirth. The edition hit the newsstands on April 11, 1938. With immediate effect the New York police department began to confiscate each copy. Editor Roy E. Larsen was even compelled to replace one street vendor, who had been arrested for distributing the magazine and charged with obscenity. Larsen too was arrested on the same charge later in the day. By the end of the affair, over 10,000 copies were confiscated in various parts of the United States.<sup>88</sup>

We may assume that a fear of science and its potential to demystify or disprove the existence of God or to problematise sacred tenets of the Catholic faith was reason enough for the American Catholic Church to condemn and lambast such a public discussion of childbirth, such as that featured in *Birth of a Baby*. Nevertheless, the equating of pregnancy with indigestion seems to leave unappreciated the serious health issues pregnancy raises for both mother and

child, especially during the Great Depression when malnutrition and unsanitary conditions were the norm. For a patriotic Church with an ardent pro-life policy in a supposedly rational, technologically advanced nation this attitude seems somewhat contradictory. Indeed, seeming as the American Catholic Church embraced the scientific innovations of radio and cinema as well as various war machines it would appear to be specifically, or at least especially, *medical* science that was considered taboo.

Generally positive and, indeed, inventive representations of medical science were fought by the American Catholic Church throughout and beyond our period. This was most consistently seen in the example of horror films. Rarely were these films condemned as even the PCA and the Legion understood them to be gothic fantasies. Nevertheless, such films were consistently restricted. In the 1940 film *The Ape* a mad scientist needs the spinal fluid from a human donor in order to cure a young woman's polio. The film was restricted by the Legion of Decency due to a "tendency of picture to present as permissible murders committed for scientific purposes".<sup>89</sup> It was a similar story for the 1943 film, *Cry of the Werewolf*. Also given a "B" rating, the Legion's review read, "Dialogue and treatment in this fantasy indicate some acceptance of the possibility of changing a human being into an animal." So too was Boris Karloff's *The Walking Dead* restricted to a "B" classification for its depiction of life being created by a doctor in a laboratory.<sup>90</sup>

For the American Catholic Church the troubling aspect of medical science, as hinted above, was that in screen representations it was used to give human beings the power of God. Naturally, this was interpreted as a grave threat to religious faith as it promised to re-organise the traditional hierarchy of both the temporal and spiritual worlds. The American Catholic Church, however advanced or arguably progressive, could not possibly countenance, to employ Nietzschean language, the killing of God by man. We see this clearly in the 1931 film, *Frankenstein*. After bringing the monster to life, Dr. Frankenstein uttered what later became a famous line of dialogue, "Now I know what it's like to BE God!" The movie, predating the PCA and the Legion, was originally released with this line present

in the final cut, but when it was re-released in the late 1930s the PCA demanded that the dialogue be removed on the grounds that it was blasphemous. In the revised, Catholicised version a loud clap of thunder was strategically placed on the soundtrack drowning out the scientist's proclamation. As such, one could argue that the utterance of blasphemy was dominated by the booming, disapproving voice of God. So as to further Catholicise the film, the famous character actor Edward Van Sloan prefaced the film with an introduction, written by the devout Catholic John Houston, in which he informed the audience that, "We are about to unfold the story of Frankenstein, a man of science who sought to create another man after his own image without reckoning upon God."<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, the film was still banned completely from the state of Kansas, where the local censor board argued that the film exhibited "cruelty and tended to debase morals".<sup>92</sup>

There were other examples in which science but not medical science was challenged. Another front in the war against science was the use of the western genre to attack technological progress. In this context technology served as a modernity in a crystallised form. American Catholic cultural producers sought to shift the western away from depictions of the "Old West", wherein the savage wilderness was civilised, to those featuring the "New West". According to Wayne McMullen, "Unlike the Old West, however, the inhabitants of the New West attempt to keep the past alive in the present. The imperiled land in the New West is an enclave of past ways of living within a technologically advanced present-day society."<sup>93</sup> In other words, the frontier was used to promote the moral decency of American Catholic traditionalism in the face of the corruptive nature of encroaching modernity as embodied by technology. This scepticism towards technology and the promotion of traditionalism was arguably most clearly seen in the films of Gene Autry. A strong example is *Public Cowboy No. 1* (1937) in which a nefarious gang of cattle rustlers utilise refrigerator trucks, planes and two-way radios to steal, slaughter and sell their bovine targets. In addition, after the rustlers murder the local sheriff his replacement is a clear symbol of urban modernity: a "scientific criminologist" by the name of Quackenbush. Though the townsfolk

are quick to applaud the new lawman, Autry and his rancher gang are well aware that he is in actual fact merely a "defective detective" (as the pun in the sheriff's name makes all too obvious). The nobility and correctness of Autry's traditionalism are most obviously highlighted in the film's finale in which Autry and his team capture the cattle rustlers riding on horseback while Quackenbush's fleet of motorbikes and mopeds become stuck in mud. Equally, important to note here is that in addition to science being shown to be a carrier of sin it is also shown to be synonymous with crime and gangsterism, which, as we have discussed above, were also equated with sinfulness and anti-Catholicism/Americanism.<sup>94</sup>

The fusion of these two themes (anti-gangsterism and science as sin) was made even more apparent in Autry's 1936 film, *The Old Corral*. The film begins in a sleazy Chicago nightclub in which Italian gangster Mike Scarlotti murders impresario Tony Pearl. The killing is witnessed by Eleanor, a blues singer, who flees to the west for survival, thus portraying Catholicised traditionalism as a protector/haven. Upon arrival Eleanor meets Simms, a local nightclub owner, who secretly plans to ransom the witness back to Scarlotti. Simms, sinful modernity is best exemplified in a sequence in which he impatiently berates a team of petrol pump attendants who are too engrossed in a chess game to fuel his fancy automobile. When they do finally attend to Simms' needs they show contempt towards this, another "damn city boy". The finale repeats the themes from *Public Cowboy No. 1*, as Autry and his crew come to the rescue of Eleanor, who has been kidnapped by Scarlotti, on horseback and disable Scarlotti's automobile by initiating a cattle stampede. Thus the moral traditionalism as reflected in the rural simplicity of Autry and his lifestyle once again overcomes the criminal, technologically dependent modernity exemplified by the Italian-American gangster Scarlotti.

In conclusion, the war the American Catholic Church unleashed upon the temporal world once again required the fusion of the essentially secular American morality with that of the American Catholic Church, or, in other words, the creation, or illusion of a "oneness" in popular culture. This resulted in a sort of deification of secular,



often historical figures. Indeed, to be an American hero, as John Doe and Abraham Lincoln were presented, was to become something of a Christ figure who advocated that a decidedly Catholicised American way of life was natural, legitimate and worthy of personal sacrifice. Only through adhering to such principles, according to the concept, could one become a true American citizen. Failure to respect such exemplars, or ways of being, would cast the sinner in question as an "outsider" or "foreigner". This concept of American citizenship was expanded to incorporate varying elements of race and immigration. Indeed, the Irish-Americans who were in positions of authority in the American Catholic Church saw to it that Irish-American Catholics were depicted as the most patriotic, brave and, importantly, law-abiding of all American citizens. They were shown, to modulate a phrase, as the rock on which the Church of America was built. Conversely, blacks and Jews (outsiders) were exposed to, and supplicated by, the most loathsome treatment in American civilisation. This is not to argue that the American Catholic Church orchestrated such treatment, though we have seen that they were to some extent complicit in it, especially in regards to the blatant anti-Semitism exhibited by the PCA and the Legion.

Consequently, whilst the screen was filled with glorious depictions of Irish-American Catholics there was barely any representation of Jews or Judaism while the few cinematic black characters that emerged were generally subservient individuals conforming to racial, not to mention racist, stereotypes. Though discrimination kept blacks and Jews largely off screen a similar distaste for Italian-Americans was not hidden from cinematic representation. Italian-Americans were the alternate side to the Irish-American Catholic's heroism and citizenship. They were depicted as "fallen" Catholics who had embraced greed, violence and vanity. Indeed, the millions of Italian immigrants who came to America did so largely after, albeit immediately after, the bulk of Irish immigration. As such, the American Catholic Church had already been established by the Irish immigrant. Italian Catholics, speaking a different language and with customs that fit neither the Anglo hegemony in the US nor the Irish interpretation of Catholicism, became a black sheep for the American Catholic Church if not an

outright embarrassment. Consequently, to maintain their hegemonic position within the American Catholic Church and the American establishment more broadly, Irish-American Catholics portrayed their Italian equivalents as "foreigners" effectively responsible for all crime, sin and immorality in the US.

Another imperative compelling the depiction of criminality in this fashion was that the crime film itself presented a difficulty for American Catholic cultural producers. On balance, they would rather not see violence, crime and criminality on the screen. However, they did not possess a tyrant's control over all means of cultural production throughout the United States. As such, if crime features were to be produced, which in themselves were interpreted as threatening not only morality but the established legal and economic institutions of the nation, then the American Catholic Church would employ its influence to protect those institutions by promoting them as natural and legitimate whilst simultaneously utilising the existence of the genre to demonise a group of people it considered to be its racial inferior.

The American Catholic Church also attempted to use cultural production to reduce the growth of and acceptance for science. However, via the fusion of temporal Americanism (or citizenship) and American Catholicism, there did exist a degree of appreciation for several tools of science, such as cinema of course. Consequently, the ire of the American Catholic Church was almost uniquely reserved for depictions of medical science, specifically the demystification of the creation of life. The American Catholic Church, in harmony with the Roman Catholic Church in general, believed that if the artificial creation of life could be harnessed by man the very existence of God, at least as an intellectual conception, would be threatened. As such, scientists were usually displayed as screaming madmen and their creations always met an untimely demise, as often did the scientist. Even though this theme was overwhelmingly promoted via depictions of medical science, the Gene Autry westerns were also utilised to demonstrate this 'science is sin' paradigm. In such motion pictures, traditionalism was represented as synonymous with safety, decency and happiness whereas modernity, as

exemplified by technology, encouraged criminality, and in a fusion with the racial theme, particularly Italian-American gangsterism. However, by trusting in the forces of traditionalism, such films preached, good will prevail.

The ruling ideas of each age has ever been the ideas of its ruling class

Marx and Engels<sup>95</sup>

# CONCLUSION

## A PREACHMENT FOR PATRIOTISM

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon wrote that during World War II sections of the Allied hierarchy were relieved when the V-2 rockets obliterated the East End of London.<sup>1</sup> That was the district where the masses dwelt and they represented, and in fact always had represented, the more significant threat to traditionalism and the power of the status quo. If we consider Pynchon's argument as a Gramscian analogy wherein the V-2 rockets become "culture", in our Marcusean sense, then we can agree that during the long 1930s the American Catholic Church attacked the US masses where they dwelt with their own brand of incendiary weapons.

The ambition of this book was to pose a question somewhat ignored by the existing literature: did the American Catholic Church make a considered and genuine attempt to use cinema to merge together its public identity with the American social moral code? Over the course of four chapters and an extended introduction, we have looked at the mechanics of cultural production in the United States during the long 1930s. Moreover, we have examined how decidedly American Catholic institutions designed to produce culture, including the PCA and the Legion of Decency, sought to fashion popular culture. We have investigated four macrocosmic themes, Mysticism, Sexuality, War, and the Temporal World, and whilst it would be foolhardy to argue that we have exhausted every possible theme and example relating to this

subject, indeed we have not, this study has presented a rich discussion on topics that cover the essential tenets of American Catholicism and its engagement with the socio-economic, political and cultural issues of the day.

Consequently, we can assert with confidence that during the period in question the American Catholic Church considered itself at war with elements of the modern world, both inside US borders and internationally, and as such made every effort possible to control the one weapon it believed capable of ensuring its victory over the forces of communism, secularism, indifference, sexual liberation, immigration and science: the cinema. Indeed, in 1936, Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* praised the Legion of Decency, and by extension the American Catholic Church, for its "holy crusade".<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when Facey claims that the PCA and the Legion in particular did not "signify the adoption of a new policy which would invade the political sphere",<sup>3</sup> we are compelled to wholeheartedly disagree. Indeed, the *Vigilanti Cura* endorses the American Catholic Church's direct efforts to "invade" and shape the primary facets of American life.

Recreation in its manifold variety has become a necessity of people who labour under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry. But it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and therefore must be morally healthy. It must be elevated to the rank of a positive factor for good, and must seek to arouse a noble sentiment. A people who, in time of repose, give themselves to diversions which violate decency, honour or morality; to recreations which, especially to the young, constitute occasions for sin, are in grave danger of losing their greatest, even their national power...<sup>4</sup>

It was this perceived threat to faith and nation that so inspired the American Catholic Church. Partly due to its isolation from Rome, partly as a result of the influence of Irish immigration and partly because of internal developments, the American Catholic Church saw its faith and its nation as not only compatible but inextricably linked. An assault on American Catholicism was an attack on the United

States and vice versa. Consequently, we have seen the promotion of several themes which confound a conventional wisdom that has argued that the Legion was a mere pressure group, or passive observer, and has failed to grasp in its entirety the essentially Catholic nature of not only the Production Code but of the PCA too.

Most obviously, we have seen that it was indeed the American Catholic Church and not Protestantism which held a terrific influence over cultural production. American Protestantism was still reeling from the failure of Prohibition and too disparate and localised an institution, in fact institutions, to mount any effective challenge to control the means of cultural production. Catholicism in the United States, despite its numerical inferiority, was driven, hierarchical, well managed and centralised in areas of major urbanisation. Moreover, by promoting American Catholicism as a faith not dependant on mysticism and supernaturalism, as a faith not remote and practiced in Latin, as a faith not dour, authoritarian or one to be mourned, the American Catholic Church thereby presented itself as compatible with other Christian ideas and US philosophy in general. Indeed, as we have seen, the American Catholic Church presented itself as practical, modern, open, joyous and communicative. It was citadel America, or at least a romanticised version of America, of which Catholics, Protestants and agnostics alike dreamt during the time of the Great Depression. Not only did this theme serve to fuse together the public identity of American Catholicism with the notion of Americanism but it also won the support of Protestants who were grateful that a religious institution was attempting to save the screen from representations of sin and were instead using it to promote a Christian social moral code.

One of the most interesting features of this apparent attempted merger between the public identity of the American Catholic Church and the more commonly regarded secular themes of Americanism and patriotism was that when depicting Catholicism on screen the PCA and the Legion attempted to inject into the film what we might call a flavour of secularity. That is to say, priests were not depicted uniquely as quiet, studious men engaged in spiritual matters; they were also represented as men of action who would use their tremendous physical strength and spiritual resolve to help solve the problems of the

temporal world. More specifically, priests were portrayed as beholden not to Rome, the Vatican or even, for that matter, a higher power necessarily. The priest was American. More, he was the embodiment of and an exemplar for Americanism. The priest gave language and iconography as to how a true American should think, feel and act, at least according to the philosophy of the establishment inclusive of the American Catholic Church. However, the rituals of Catholicism were still to be shown with a saintly respect. Screen depictions of Catholic life could not be flippant or for that matter inaccurate. Nevertheless, the American Catholic cultural producers infused into the priest the quality of a guardian-protector of Americanism and of his faith, Catholicism, of which the latter was thusly shown as inextricably linked with the former.

American Catholic cultural producers contextualised the role of these supermen priests, and other heroic religious figures, by promoting the existence of a "them" group. This faction was defined by their rabid anti-Americanism (their otherness or foreignness), yet it is important to note that the "them" group were perceived to threaten not simply American law and institutions but American Catholicism and spirituality. The primary villain according to this conception of the world was communism, especially the domestic kind but also the international brand. The existence of communism helped further to ratify the fusion between the American Catholic public identity and the notions of patriotic, Catholic-inspired Americanism, or the "us" group, as it overtly threatened to eradicate both liberal capitalism and religion (which communism also saw as a merged entity). Therefore, the PCA and the Legion set about to "deny" the existence of communism and to promote the problems of society as having been solved by the current system. Moreover, this now ideal society was shown to be protected by warrior priests who would form an unbreakable barrier between the marauding communist forces and the homes of decent, law-abiding Americans. So once again, villainy, this time in the form of communism, would be defeated by adhering to the advice of screen priests: America's protectors. Running parallel to this theme was the somewhat positive representation of Nazism, which was understood by the American Catholic Church as an international antidote

to communism. In fact, Nazism was effectively ignored by American Catholic cultural producers, and was certainly not depicted as posing any direct threat to Americanism throughout the majority of the 1930s. However, and unsurprisingly, when Germany declared war on the US in 1941, propelling the United States into an alliance with the Soviet Union, the screen was filled with emphatic pro-Soviet and anti-Nazi cinema. Such is the nature of real-politik. Nevertheless, domestic communism remained an enemy and no latitude was afforded to those suspected of being a sinful un-American Red.

Regarding domestic themes, the idea of the American Catholic Church saving the US (via a war-like methodology) by essentially "secularising" itself into the American polity (and vice versa) was further promoted through anti-Semitism, the glorification of the Irish-American Catholic and the mirroring idea that the gangster had become a criminal only after he had rejected his Catholicism. Thus, religion was promoted as solving material problems, defending society, and defining the parameters of citizenship. Meanwhile, irreligion and the rejection of faith were promoted as causing social problems in which foreigners or outsiders threatened to fracture the Catholicised "oneness" of the United States. Indeed, the gangster was almost exclusively portrayed as an Italian-American. In other words, the American Catholic Church portrayed itself as being compatible with, if not part of, the key features of temporal America and its legal, economic and social framework.

In short, when depicting itself as an institution, the American Catholic Church presented itself as secularly compatible. Conversely, when the cinema presented issues of a more recognisably secular nature, the PCA and the Legion were tremendously active in their attempts to Catholicise the themes under discussion. We saw this most evidently in the introduction of "compensating moral values" into Hollywood productions from 1934. Though the concept of morality, which, as Nietzsche would argue, is by definition artificial or constructed,<sup>5</sup> can exist entirely in a secular, atheist and irreligious environment, the American Catholic Church employed it as a synonym for concepts of appropriate American Catholic behaviour, thought and actions including notions of sin and sinfulness. Consequently, by merely insisting



on the inclusion of compensating moral values, when the concept of morality was rationalised along pro-Catholic sensibilities, American Catholic cultural producers were immediately afforded the opportunity to proselytise the masses. Indeed, cinematic interpretations of morality during the long 1930s included the inviolability of marriage, pre-marital sex as sin, abortion as an act of murder and homosexuality as sexual degeneration. Though not exclusively, these themes are primarily Catholic in concept and adherence. After all, abortion is not considered "murder" in various European Protestant nations and divorce is often widespread in nations and societies outside the Catholic sphere of influence.<sup>6</sup>

However, of particular interest is the revelation that suicide, though a mortal sin according to Roman Catholicism, was occasionally utilised as a sufficient compensating moral value. Suicide in the Goethean or Shakespearean context would of course not have been tolerated either by the PCA or the Legion of Decency. Indeed, a PCA report titled *Crime in Motion Pictures*, published on February 15, 1935, stated that "suicide, as a solution of problems occurring in the development of screen drama, is to be discouraged."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in films such as *Anna Karenina* and *Doctor Monica* suicide was employed openly as a weapon with which to punish the wicked and the sinful. One can only assume that the promotion of such a theme as suicide as punishment, though colliding with traditional Roman Catholic belief, was demonstrably consistent with traditional American philosophy, which of course embraced the death penalty, otherwise loathed by Catholics, and imported its political and militaristic sensibilities from ancient Greece and pre-Christian Rome; wherein death by suicide was considered a fitting punishment (as was the case with Socrates, who was compelled to drink the poison hemlock after being found guilty of the corruption of youth and of preaching what today would be referred to as religious heresy).

Thus, we can conclude that cultural producing institutions which comprised many Jews and Protestants in the US were forced by pragmatic, ideological and geopolitical considerations to go against their natural anti-Catholic inclinations and promote a more holistic, patriotic American public image that was at one and the same time

secular yet infused with Catholic language and themes. Moreover, we have seen that the influence of the American Catholic cultural production agencies were, if not all-conquering, indeed no one could reasonably argue that, at the very least pervasive and their doctrines overwhelmingly implemented into popular culture (or at least, there was a wholehearted attempt to do so). Indeed, by 1937, three years after the introduction of the PCA and the Legion of Decency, 98 percent of films shown in the US had Breen-approved PCA seals. Of the 1937 total of 663 films submitted to the PCA, only 36 finished films were rejected and of those only nine were not re-edited and then certified.<sup>8</sup> These numbers are broadly comparable to those of the Legion. Between February 1936 and November 1937, the Legion reviewed 1271 titles, of those 1160, or 91 percent, were approved in the "A-1" or "A-2" category. Only 13 were condemned with a "C" rating and those were mostly comprised of independent and European films, shown in no more than 100 cinemas nationwide.<sup>9</sup>

In short, no other agency played a more committed or vital role in the *kulturkampf* of the long 1930s than the American Catholic Church. Considering itself involved in a war of annihilation against a veritable trove of enemies from both within and without its national borders, it mounted an exceptional effort to seize control of the one weapon it was convinced would provide it with victory due to its unfettered power to fashion a social moral code and win hearts and minds: the cinema. To what extent the American Catholic Church successfully inculcated its themes into popular consciousness is, as stated in the introduction, outside of the remit of this examination. Nevertheless, the American Catholic Church identified its enemies, selected its battlegrounds, wrote the Production Code, dominated the PCA and established the Legion of Decency (all within a four-year period), thereby controlling almost every major artery of cinema. It even boasted committed agents in the acting, directing and journalistic professions.

The influence of the American Catholic Church's activities reaches far beyond the period in question. The language and iconography generated during the long 1930s has seemingly been used throughout the twentieth century *vis à vis* communism (where it was rebranded variously as McCarthyism and "containment"), abortion, homosexuality,

criminality and the advancement (or otherwise) of medical science. Further studies of the *kulturkampf*, the American Catholic Church, and the "oneness" it sought to create in popular culture would arguably reveal the formation, shaping and modulation of a philosophy to which the American establishment still adheres to this day.

# NOTES

## Prelims

1. In the above quote the American English spelling has been used for the word "civilisation". Please note that this monograph employs British English throughout except for quotations, when an effort has been made to be as exact as possible in the presentation of material. Given that this book concentrates on US history the reader will then doubtless spot many American English spellings. I mention it here so as not to confuse the reader. These American English spellings (and other variations in style) are not errors or inconsistencies but precise quotations.

## Introduction

1. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (Penguin Books, London 2006), p. 133. See also, p. 82.
2. Pynchon effectively uses "war" and instigators of war interchangeably, referring to the establishment and the impulse it sought to generate in popular culture.
3. William Bruce Johnson, *Miracles and Sacrilege: Roberto Rossellini, the Church and Film Censorship in Hollywood* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2008), p. 26.
4. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italian and Irish of New York City* (MIT Press, Cambridge 1970), p. 230.
5. Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (Atheneum Publishers, New York 1988), pp. 258–61.
6. A Connecticut Protestant clergyman highly influential in the temperance movement in the early nineteenth century.
7. A contemporary of Beecher and the inventor of Morse Code.
8. Johnson (2008), p. 20.

9. Naturally, by *kulturkampf* I do not refer specifically to the policies of Bismark during the 1870s regarding Catholic "interference" in the German state. However, I do use the term in a Gramscian/Frankfurt school sense that refers to a cold war for the control of popular culture and the hearts and minds of the citizens fought between the forces of modernity and the agencies of tradition. As such, my usage of this term evokes its original conceptualisation and acknowledges its later appropriation during the 1960s by US right-wing politician Pat Buchanan to describe the conflict between American liberals and conservatives. In short, by this term I refer to the struggle for hegemony over popular culture and public discourse.
10. Alison M. Parker, "Mothering the Movies" in Francis G. Couvares (ed), *Hollywood, Main Street and the Church: Trying to Censor Movies Before the Production Code* (University of Massachusetts Press, Boston 2006), p. 83.
11. Ibid, p. 74.
12. Ibid, p. 87.
13. Ibid, p. 87.
14. Ibid, p. 80.
15. For more information see Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (University of Illinois Press, Chicago 2001), pp. 78–80.
16. The Progressive movement occurred primarily during the late nineteenth century. It was characterised by a series of middle-class, grass-roots pressure groups lobbying for reforms in a variety of areas including sanitation, employment conditions and the environment. It was a localised movement in its first stages, with its chief advocates being individuals such as Jane Addams, but gradually became more national in character culminating in the election of Theodore Roosevelt, who ran on a so-called progressive ticket. For more information see, *ibid*.
17. John P. Ferre, "Protestant Press Relations in the United States 1900–1930", *Church History* v62 n4 (December 1993), p. 514.
18. See Charles Musser, "Passions and the Passion Play: Theatre Film and Religion in America 1880–1900", *Film History* vV n4 (December 1993).
19. *America* LXVI (October 18, 1941), p. 40.
20. Paul W. Facey, *The Legion of Decency: A Sociological Analysis of the Emergence and Development of a Social Pressure Group* (Arno Press, New York 1974), p. 136.
21. I refer to groups such as the Protestants and the KKK as "outside" the *kulturkampf* because they were institutions that shared many of the same fears as the American Catholic Church and also sought to promote variances of "traditionalism". However, their mutual distrust prevented them from becoming overt allies. As such, the American Catholic Church needed to remove or reduce Protestant and KKK hostility towards it if it was to take the lead in

the war against its enemies. In other words, it needed to obtain permission to use the "air space" of parallel institutions so as to fly its bombing sorties.

22. Johnson (2008), p. 67.
23. Ibid, p. 67.
24. Ibid, p. 70.
25. See, Albert J. Fritsch, *Catholic Global Statistics: 1905 and Today* (<http://www.earthhealing.info/catholicstats.pdf>); Yoel Finkelman, "Nostalgia, inspiration, ambivalence: Eastern Europe, immigration, and the construction of collective memory in contemporary American Haredi historiography" in *Jewish History* 2009 v.23, pp. 57–87; James M. Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema: The Legion of Decency and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, 1933–1970* (Praeger, Westpoint 1993), p. 25.
26. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04125308p1.pdf>
27. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04125308p1ch3.pdf>
28. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04125308p1ch3.pdf>
29. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04125308p1.pdf>
30. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04125308p1ch1.pdf>
31. Steven Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001), p. 29.
32. The data provided by the 1936 Federal Census of Religious Bodies was obtained not through governmental individual interviews but rather through questions provided to individuals prepared by local Churches. As such the numbers may be skewed. In addition, non-Christians were virtually absent from the polling resulting in practically no statistics *vis a vis* Jews, Muslim, Hindus etc... For more information see Rodney Stark, "The Reliability of Historical United States Census Data on Religion", *Sociological Analysis* v53 (1992).
33. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04125308p1.pdf>
34. Skinner (1993), p. 26.
35. Ibid, p. 23. See also James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1981).
36. Ibid, p. 26.
37. Ibid, p. 26. See also Hennesey (1981), introduction.
38. Ibid, p. 34.
39. Kevin M. Schultz, "Religion as Identity in Post War America: The Last Serious Attempt to Put a Question on Religion in the United States Census", *Journal of American History* (September 1, 2006), p. 383.
40. Johnson (2008), p. 29.
41. Gregory D. Black, *The Catholic Crusade Against the Movies 1940–1970* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997), p. 8.

42. An example of social commentary in 1920s silent cinema is the 1921 Chaplin film, *The Idle Class*, in which Chaplin's tramp sneaks into an exclusive golf club only to discover the aristocrats there to be drunken buffoons. He is mistaken for the husband of a well-to-do lady who prefers the tramp to her actual spouse.
43. A representative example of the "excesses" of the Jazz Age is *Walking Back* (1928), which features an opening montage depicting dancing girls, drinks being mixed, car engines being revved and piano keys being thumped to produce hot jazz, much to the chagrin of the American Catholic Church.
44. See Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Knopf, New York 1990), p. xv and David Desser, "'Consumerist Realism': American Jewish Life and the Classical Hollywood Cinema", *Film History* v8 (September 1996), p. 261.
45. *Birth of a Nation* cast the KKK as heroes bringing order to the South after the ravages of the US civil war. At the film's Los Angeles premier costumed Klansmen paraded outside the cinema like celebrities.
46. Black (1997), p. 11.
47. *Ibid*, p. 12.
48. Daniel Lord, *Played By Ear* (Loyola Press, Chicago 1956), p. 289.
49. Will Hays, *The Memoirs of Will Hays* (Doubleday, Garden City 1955), p. 439.
50. For a brief encapsulation of the growth of US film censorship see, Stephen Clinton Lee's Ph.D thesis, *Pending Catholicisation: the Legion of Decency, Duel in the Sun and the Threat of Censorship* (University of Texas, Texas August 1985), pp. 5-6.
51. For literature concerning the creation and functions of the Legion of Decency see, Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp. 151-151, 162-164, 300; Black (1997), pp. 3-20, 22-28; Carr (2001), pp. 58, 98, 125-131; Phillip French, *The Movie Moguls* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1969), pp. 78-81; Leif Furhammer and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film* (Studio Vista, London 1971), pp. 57-77; Les Keyser and Barbara Keyser, *Hollywood and the Catholic Church: The Image of Roman Catholicism in American Movies* (Loyola University Press, Chicago 1984), introduction and chapters 1 and 3.
52. Black (1997), pp. 24-25.
53. French (1969), p. 78.
54. Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (Yale University Press, New Haven 1996), p. 144.
55. Joseph Breen to Father Wilfred Parsons September 9, 1929 and January 14, 1930, Wilfred Parsons Papers at Georgetown University.
56. Joseph Breen to Father Corrigan October 17, 1930. Box 44, Will Hays Papers, Indiana State Historical Society.

57. French (1969), p. 80.
58. Black (1997), p. 28.
59. Production Code File, "*Little Caesar* (1931)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
60. Black (1997), p. 3.
61. Skinner (1993), p. 37.
62. Although it was invented in 1892, the Pledge of Allegiance, which children are often required to recite in school every morning, encapsulated the virtues of respect and gratitude toward the nation that the American establishment wished to promote. To be precise, the Pledge of Allegiance embodied the virtues of unswerving belief in the righteousness of the nation and its heroes. The opening lines illustrate this point:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands:

One nation

Indivisible

With Liberty and Justice for all

In order to make more explicit the United States' Christianity, in June 1954 President Eisenhower amended the Pledge to include the words "Under God" after the line "One nation".

63. Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (I.B.Tauris, New York 1998), p. 16. See also, John Sedgwick and Michael Porkorny, "The Film Business in the United States and Britain during the 1930s", *The Economic History Review* LVIII n1 (Feb 2005), pp. 82, 107–108.
64. John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (William B. Eerdmans, Cambridge 2002), p. 133.
65. Coyne (1998), p. 16.
66. Lemar Taney Beman (ed), *Selected Articles on Censorship of the Theater and Moving Pictures* (HW Wilson, New York 1931), p. 6.
67. William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Oxford University Press, New York 1973), p. 76.
68. Discussed below in the historiography section.
69. For survey discussions of the Great Depression and the New Deal years see, Anthony Badger, *The New Deal and Depression Years 1933–1940* (Macmillan, London 1989), chapters 1 and 2; Piers Brendan, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (Jonathan Cape, London 2002), chapters 4 and 11; Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties: The Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (University of New York Press, New York 1989), chapters 4, 5, 6; Peter Clements, *Prosperity, Depression and the New Deal* (Hodder and



- Stoughton, New York 2001), chapters 5, 6 and 7; Paul Dukes, *The Emergence of the Superpowers: A Short Comparative History of the USA and the USSR* (Macmillan, London 1970), pp. 105–107, 113–115; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War 1929–1945* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999), chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7; Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States of America: From 1492 to the Present* (Longman, Harlow 1996), chapter 15.
70. Cashman (1989), p. 146.
  71. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
  72. For a lengthier discussion on the definition of religion please see Ragnhild Nordås, "Beliefs and Bloodshed: Understanding Religion and Intrastate Conflict", *Unpublished PhD Thesis* (Norwegian University of Science of Technology March 2010), pp. 10–13.
  73. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
  74. These are common occurrences in the literature and are even employed by otherwise outstanding writers such as Skinner. Indeed, see Skinner (1993), pp. xiii–xiv.
  75. Neil Renwick, *America's World Identity: The Politics of Exclusion* (Macmillan, New York 2000), p. 22.
  76. See below for more information and also, Alexander McGregor, *The Shaping of Popular Consent: A Comparative Study Between the Soviet Union and the United States 1929–1941* (Cambria Press, Youngstown 2007).
  77. The following biographies also illuminate the worldview of cultural producers, A. Scott Berg, *Goldwyn* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1980); Donald Dewey, *James Stewart: A Biography* (Turner Publishing, Atlanta 1996); Jeffrey Meyers, *Gary Cooper: American Hero* (Cooper Square Press, New York 2001).
  78. Autobiographies expressing this view include Frank Capra, *Name above the Title* (Macmillan, New York 1971); James Cagney, *Cagney on Cagney* (New English Library, London 1976). Interesting biographies include Ray Carney, *American Vision: The Films of Frank Capra* (Wesleyan University Press, Wesleyan 1996); David Willis, *The Films of Frank Capra* (Sacred Cow Press, Metuchen 1974).
  79. The Hollywood for Roosevelt Committee was a voluntary campaign organisation which included among its members significant cultural producers including Frank Capra, Walter Huston and John Ford.
  80. PSF, file 7024, "Hollywood for Roosevelt Committee". FDR Presidential Library.
  81. Ian Scott, *American Politics in Hollywood Film* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2000), p. 6.
  82. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

83. Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss (eds), *The Essential Marcuse: Selected Writings of Philosopher and Social Critic Herbert Marcuse* (Beacon Press, Boston 2007), pp. 13–14.
84. Ibid, p. 15.
85. Ibid, pp. 16–17.
86. See McGregor (2007), pp. 13–17.
87. Perhaps the most significant single work on the nature of myths, outside of an anthropological context, is Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Meridian, New York 1956). See in particular p. 30. For a study of myths within an anthropological context a particularly good example is Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998).
88. William G. Doty, *Mythology: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa 1986), pp. 13–15.
89. Quoted in Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992), p. 85.
90. Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Democracy and Education* (Routledge Falmer, New York 2003), pp. 90–99.
91. David Forgacs (ed), *The Antonio Gramsci Reader* (Lawrence and Wishart, London 1999), p. 376.
92. For discussions of the importance of cinema see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity 1931–1958* (Harvard University Press, London 2002), chapter 4; Coyne (1998), introduction and chapter 1; Diana Holmes and Alison Smith (eds), *100 Years of European Cinema: Entertainment or Ideology?* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 2000), especially introduction; Lawrence and Jewett (2002), especially introduction; Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1999), especially introduction and chapter 2.
93. "Diegesis" is the term used to describe music playing within the story of the film, such as on the radio or in a nightclub. In other words, it is the music the characters can hear.
94. "Non-diegesis" music is the term used to describe music playing outside of the film's narrative. In other words, it is the term for the film's score or incidental music, which the film's characters cannot hear.
95. Black (1997), p. 16.
96. *The New York Times* (November 20, 1932), p. 30 and *The New York Times* (February 23, 1933), p. 15.
97. See below.
98. See McGregor (2007), pp. 227–288.

99. See William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932–1940* (Harper and Row, New York 1963); William E. Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years: On Roosevelt and his Legacy* (Columbia University Press, New York 1995); Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (eds), *The New Deal and the Triumph of Liberalism* (University of Massachusetts Press, Boston 2002); Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *The Great Contraction 1929–1933* (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1967), chapter 5; Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States 1867–1960* (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1963), introduction; Cashman (1989), pp. 219–230; Kenneth S. Davis *FDR: The New Deal Years 1933–1937* (Random House, New York 1979), chapter 11; Barry D. Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915–1945* (Chicago University Press, Chicago 1983), chapter 7; Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2000), pp. ix–x and chapter 7.
100. Leuchtenburg, “The New Deal at the End of the Twentieth Century”, in Milkis and Mileur (eds) (2002), pp. 26–27.
101. Sidney M. Milkis, “Introduction”, in Milkis and Mileur (eds) (2002), pp. 1–5.
102. Friedman and Schwartz (1967), p. i.
103. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (Penguin Classics, London 1987), pp. 21, 124.
104. Friedman and Schwartz (1963), pp. 300–301.
105. For works representative of the “New Left” see Paul Conkin, *The New Deal* (Routledge, London 1968), chapters 3 and 4; Paul Conkin (ed), *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1979), especially the introduction; Richard S. Kirkendall, “The New Deal as Watershed: The Recent Literature”, *The Journal of American History* v54 n4 (March 1968), especially pp. 848–859; Howard Zinn (ed), *New Deal Thought* (Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis 1966), chapters 55 and 56; Zinn (1996), especially chapter 15 and conclusion. Good examples from the general left include William Graebner, *The Engineering of Consent: Democracy and Authority in Twentieth Century America* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1997), chapter 4; Kennedy (1999), chapters 1 and 8; Gabriel Kolko, *A Century of War: Politics, Conflicts and Society since 1914* (New Press, New York 1994), chapter 14.
106. Kirkendall (1968), p. 849.
107. Zinn (1966), p. xvi.
108. Kennedy (1999), p. 254.
109. Robert Sklar, *Movie Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (Vintage Books, Toronto 1994), p. 161. See also *A World History of Film* (Prentice Hall, London 2003).

110. Ibid, pp. 163–167.
111. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1992), pp. 8–9. For the full argument see, pp. 23–223.
112. Marybeth Hamilton, “Censoring Mae West” in Couvares (2006), pp. 187–211.
113. David M. Lugowski, “Queering the (New) Deal: Lesbian and Gay Representation and the Depression Era Cultural Politics of Hollywood’s Production Code” in *Cinema Journal* v38, n3 (Winter 1999), p. 12.
114. Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood 1918–1939* (University of Exeter Press, Exeter 1997), p. 127.
115. See Facey (1974), p. 127 and p. 136.
116. Russell Whelan, “The Legion of Decency”, *The American Mercury* v60 (June 1945), pp. 655–663.
117. Francis Couvares, “Introduction” in Couvares (ed) (2006), p. 3.
118. Ibid, pp. 2–3.
119. Vasey (1997), p. 131.
120. Daniel Biltereyst, “‘Down with French Vaudevilles!’ The Catholic Film Movement’s Resistance and Boycott of French Cinema in the 1930s” in *Studies in French Cinema* v6 n1 (2006), p. 30.
121. Johnson (2008), p. 133.
122. Skinner (1993), p. 33.
123. Black (1997), p. 1
124. Production Code File, “*Little Caesar* (1931)”, The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
125. R. Laurence Moore, “American Religion as Cultural Imperialism” in R. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (eds), *The American Century in Europe* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2003), p. 151.
126. Ibid, p. 151.
127. Ibid, pp. 154–155.
128. Ibid, p. 152.
129. Ibid, p. 159.
130. See Johnson (2008), Skinner (1993) and Black (1997).

## Chapter 1 Mysticism and the Supernatural

1. The Latin mass and the priest facing away from the congregation is pre-Vatican II. It has not been so since the 1960s.
2. See Skinner (1993), p. 31.
3. “The 1930s: Religion: Overview.” American Decades. 2001. *Encyclopedia.com*. (May 16, 2010). <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3468301309.html>

4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2007), p. 32e.
5. *Motion Pictures Classified by National Legion of Decency: February 1936-November 1948* (The Episcopal Committee of Motion Pictures for the Legion of Decency, New York 1948), p. vii. Hereafter this text shall be referred to as Legion of Decency (1948).
6. Black (1997), p. 21.
7. Johnson (2008), p. 32.
8. Skinner (1993), p. 28.
9. Johnson (2008), pp. 65–66.
10. Cashman (1989), p. 146.
11. Zinn (1996), p. 378.
12. Ibid, pp. 387–388.
13. [http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This\\_Land.htm](http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm)
14. Legion of Decency (1948), p. ix.
15. Ibid, p. x.
16. *America* (October 6, 1942), p. 602.
17. Legion of Decency (1948), p. x.
18. Clippings Folder, "*Captains Courageous* (1936)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
19. Production Code File, "*Going My Way* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Clippings Folder, "*Going My Way* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
25. Production Code File, "*Song of Bernadette* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
26. Clippings Folder, "*Going My Way* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
27. Often referred to as Sister Aimee, McPherson was a Canadian evangelist and radio host during the 1920s. She utilised the burgeoning technology of mass communication to establish her own church called the Foursquare Church.
28. Clippings Folder, "*Going My Way* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Facey (1974), p. 16.
34. *Christian Century* (June 20, 1934), p. 822.
35. Francis Couvares, "Hollywood, Main Street and the Church" in Couvares (ed) (2006), p. 150.
36. *Morals and the Screen* (Lay Organisation's Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, New York 1935), p. 5.
37. Skinner (1993), p. 48.
38. Black (1994), p. 300.
39. Furio Columbo, *God in America: Religion and Politics in the United States* (Columbia University Press, New York 1984), p. 41. For another enunciation of this argument see Saverio Giovaccini, *Hollywood Modernism* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2001), pp. 21–28.
40. Robert Booth Fowler, *Unconventional Partners: Religion and Liberal Culture in the United States* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1989), p. 82.
41. McGregor (2007), pp. 245–249
42. For material relating to cooperation between Hollywood and religious institutions see Beman (ed), (1931), pp. 6, 23–24; Black (1994), pp. 151–164, 290–305; Black (1997), pp. 3–28; Carr (2001), pp. 90–98, 125–129; Columbo (1984), pp. ix, 41, 97; French (1969), pp. 78–90, 98–106; Furhammer and Isaksson (1971), pp. 57–77.
43. Richard Maltby, "'Baby Face', or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash", *Screen* v27, n2 (March–April 1986), p. 25.
44. Francis Couvares, "Hollywood, Main Street and the Church" in Couvares (ed) (2006), p. 151.
45. David Chidester, *Patterns of Power: Religion and Politics in American Culture* (Prentice Hall, Englewood 1988), pp. 90–94.
46. Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* (University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville 1988), p. 21.
47. "Compensating Moral Values", June 13, 1934 box 47, Will Hays Papers. Indiana Historical Society. See also, Facey (1974), p. 73.
48. Wilfrid Parsons to Daniel Lord, March 15, 1930. Wilfrid Parsons Papers. Georgetown University.
49. Quoted from Carr (2001), p. 98.
50. Will Hays, *See and Hear* (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Inc. 1929), p. 4.
51. Jonathan Munby, "'Manhattan Melodrama' Art of the Weak: Telling History from the other side in the 1930s Talking Gangster Film", *The Journal of American Studies* v30 n1 (1996), p. 117.

52. French (1969), pp. 105–106.
53. David Desser, "'Consumerist Realism': American Jewish Life and the Classical Hollywood Cinema", *Film History* v8 (September 1996), p. 261.
54. "Jackson Garner Papers", container 108, box 69, file "Vatican and War", FDR Presidential Library.
55. Ibid.
56. PSF, container 51, file "Vatican-Taylor, Myron C.", FDR Presidential Library.
57. For material on the representation of priests in the US during the 1930s see, Black (1997), pp. 3–5, 26–28; Black (1994), pp. 157–164; Ivan Butler, *Religion in the Cinema* (A.S. Barnes and Co, New York 1969), introduction; Cagney (1979), pp. 72–73; Les Keyser and Barbara Keyser (1984), introduction; Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt, *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Westview Press, Oxford 1995), pp. 7, 23, 57–71; Vasey (1997), introduction.
58. Jeffrey Mahan, "Introduction", in Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan (eds), *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (University of California Press, Berkeley 2000), pp. 2–3.
59. Martin and Ostwalt (1995), p. 62.
60. Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929–1941* (Random House, New York 1984), p. 340.
61. Clippings Folder, "Angels with Dirty Faces (1938)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
62. Ibid.
63. Clippings Folder, "The Hurricane (1937)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
64. Author's italicisation.
65. Clippings Folder, "The Hurricane (1937)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
66. Clippings Folder, "Going My Way (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
67. Ibid.
68. Legion of Decency (1948), p. 8.
69. "Jackson Gardner Papers", container 108, box 69, file "Vatican and the War", FDR Presidential Library. Emphasis added.
70. Ibid.
71. Quoted in French (1969), p. 80.
72. Francis Couvares, "Hollywood, Main Street and the Church" in Couvares (ed) (2006), p. 151.
73. Edward A. Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Thought* (University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 1973), pp. 170–172.

74. Black (1997), p. 22.
75. Ferre (1993), p. 514.

## Chapter 2 Sexuality and Sensuality

1. Black (1997), p. 1.
2. Skinner (1993), p. 37.
3. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-marr.html>
4. For more detail regarding traditional Catholic opinions *vis a vis* sexuality see Skinner (1993), pp. 20–30.
5. Production Code File, “*Little Caesar* (1931)”, The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
6. Ibid.
7. Daniel Lord, “The Code: One Year Later”, April 23, 1931, box 42, Will Hays Papers. Indiana Historical Society.
8. Skinner (1993), p. 34.
9. “Breen to Quigley May 1, 1932”, Martin Quigley Papers.
10. Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film 1928–1942* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1991), p. 113.
11. Production Code File, “*Ecstasy* (1934)”, The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
12. The film is available today but usually still with the pool scene removed.
13. Legion of Decency (1948), pp. 22, 47, 68.
14. Johnson (2008), p. 129.
15. *A Popular Guide to Right Standards in Motion Picture Entertainment* (The Episcopal Committee of Motion Pictures for the Legion of Decency, New York 1935), p. 8.
16. Ibid. See also, Charles Musser, “Passion and the Passion Play” in Couvares (ed) (2006), pp. 45–46.
17. David M. Lugowski, “Queering the (New) Deal: Lesbian and Gay Representation and the Depression Era Cultural Politics of Hollywood’s Production Code”, *Cinema Journal* v38 n3 (Winter 1999), p. 4.
18. Production Code File, “*Baby Face* (1934)”, The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
19. They had objected to the film’s original ending in which one of Lilly’s lovers committed suicide in despair over her actions as it violated the Catholic law of suicide as mortal sin. See, *ibid.*
20. Jacobs (1991), p. 41.
21. Production Code File, “*The Easiest Way* (1931)”, The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.



22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aquinas-sex.html>
26. Facey (1974), pp. 106–107.
27. Ibid, p. 109.
28. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aquinas-sex.html>
29. Umberto Eco, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Leona* (Harcourt, San Diego 2005), p. 344.
30. Production Code File, "*The Sisters* (1938)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Production Code File, "*A Farewell to Arms* (1932)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
34. Production Code File, "*Scarface* (1932)" The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
35. Legion of Decency (1948), pp. 50–53.
36. Ibid, p. 1 and p. 4.
37. Production Code File, "*That Hamilton Woman* (1941)" The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
38. Production Code File, "*Ann Vickers* (1934)" The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
39. Production Code File, "*Anna Karenina* (1936)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Production Code File, "*This Thing Called Love* (1939)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
45. Jacobs (1991), p. 113.
46. Production Code File, "*Cimarron* (1931)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
47. Production Code File, "*Barbary Coast* (1935)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
48. Production Code File, "*Private Number* (1936)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
49. It must be noted that the attempt to ban screen representations of prostitution should be understood as a distinctly American Catholic principle.

Whilst naturally other religious institutions would disapprove of the profession it was not considered immoral pan-internationally or pan-culturally. Indeed, it was often an accepted social occurrence in Latin America and Europe, where Protestant Holland legalised prostitution and where, during the 1920s, the USSR had debated the issue.

50. Production Code File, "*Men in White* (1934)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Production Code File, "*Doctor Monica* (1934)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
56. Ibid.
57. Clippings Folder, "*Doctor Monica* (1934)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library. See also, Vasey (1997), p. 135.
58. Production Code File, "*The Outlaw* (1941)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
59. *Newsweek* (April 17, 1941), p. 52. See also Black (1997), p. 35.
60. Black (1997), p. 35.
61. Facey (1974), p. 115.
62. Vasey (1997), p. 207.
63. For a good argument on this theme see David M. Lugowski, "Queering the (New) Deal: Lesbian and Gay Representation and the Depression Era Cultural Politics of Hollywood's Production Code", *Cinema Journal* v38 n3 (Winter 1999).
64. Sklar (1994), p. 174.
65. Olga Martin, *Hollywood's Movie Commandments* (Wilson, New York 1937), p. 42.
66. Production Code File, "*The Flame Within* (1935)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
67. Production Code File, "*Boys' Town* (1938)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
68. Production Code File, "*Follow the Fleet* (1936)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
69. Martin (1937), p. 42.
70. Production Code File, "*The Public Enemy* (1931)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
71. See McGregor (2007), p. 187.

72. Production Code File, "*Going My Way* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Clippings Folder, "*Going My Way* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
77. Production Code File, "*San Francisco* (1937)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
78. Ibid.
79. Clippings Folder, "*San Francisco* (1937)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
80. Ibid.
81. Production Code File, "*San Francisco* (1937)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
82. Tracy's moral roles and his screen relationship with Gable remain of deep interest. Even in resolutely secular films such as *Boom Town* (1940) Tracy acts as Gable's moral monitor even beating him up in a fist fight for having cheated on Claudette Colbert. This was perhaps contrary to audience expectations but served to make a firm moral point.
83. MHL, Production Code File, "*King of Kings* (1927)", The Academy of Motion Picture Art Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.

### Chapter 3 War and International Diplomacy

1. Production Code File, "*The Fighting 69th* (1940)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
2. It is an interesting point to note here that throughout the reams of PCA files there exists scores of similar comments however, as hopefully has been demonstrated on these pages, there were essentially no such similar requests on behalf of Protestant patrons. Indeed, the above comment by Breen practically assumed that motion picture patrons and Catholics were virtually interchangeable. In fact, the only allusion to the tastes of Protestant audiences can be found in files referring to edits of Hollywood films destined for foreign markets, particularly Britain. The theme emerging here, that the American Catholic Church was essentially fusing together Catholicism with Americanism, was of course central to *The Fighting 69th*.

3. Production Code File, "*The Fighting 69th* (1940)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
4. Ibid.
5. Clippings Folder, "*The Fighting 69th* (1940)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Production Code File, "*The Fighting 69th* (1940)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
9. Walsh (1996), p. 159.
10. R. Laurence Moore, "American Religion as Cultural Imperialism" in Moore and Vaudagna (eds) (2003), p. 161.
11. Ibid, p. 161.
12. Ibid, p. 161.
13. Ibid, p. 161.
14. In fact, the thrust of such themes proves the necessity for our concept of the long 1930s.
15. Production Code File, "*The Public Enemy* (1931)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
16. Brownlow (1990) p. xv.
17. Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Polity Press, Malden 1999), p. 229.
18. McGregor (2007), p. 180.
19. Facey (1974), p. 121.
20. McGregor (2007), pp. 101, 115 and 171.
21. Production Code File, "*Blockade* (1938)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. See also Facey (1974), pp. 119–120 and Walsh (1996), p. 207.
29. Legion of Decency (1948), p. 12.
30. Clippings Folder, "*Blockade* (1938)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.
35. Walsh (1996), pp. 156–158.
36. Facey (1974), p. 120.
37. Not to be confused with the popular beverage of course. White Russian refers here to the umbrella term used, especially during the Russian civil war, to describe the various groups that opposed Bolshevism such as the aristocracy, monarchists, liberals, etc.
38. Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (Harper Perennial, London 2006), pp. 140–145.
39. Ibid, p. 145.
40. The small Basque village reduced to rubble during a day-time air raid by the Luftwaffe and of course made famous/infamous by the Picasso representation.
41. Ibid, p. 222 and p. 287.
42. Skinner (1993), p. 43.
43. *The New York Times* (May 20, 1939), p. 39.
44. *The New York Times* (May 29, 1939), p. 8.
45. Ibid, p. 8.
46. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion* (Dover, Minnesota 2008), p. 89.
47. Facey (1974), p. 178.
48. See, Shindler (1996), p. 55.
49. However, it must be noted that often these “radicals” were somewhat homogenised within the prevailing climate of Hollywood cultural production. 18 months after Ornitz made his comments he seemed to have changed his mind. He declined the opportunity to write a biography of Stokes, who had recently succumbed to cancer, explaining to the Chairman of the C.P.U.S.A. that he had found instead “a good movie job”. Thus, as Colin Shindler points out, once “...radical writers arrived in Hollywood their effectiveness as [maverick] political dramatists was eroded. Living in the sunshine in large houses with the ubiquitous swimming pool, their priorities changed.”
50. McGregor (2007), pp. 316–317. See also Giovaccini (2001), pp. 21–28.
51. “Quigley to Breen” January 10, 1939. Box 1.3, Martin Quigley Papers.
52. Production Code File, “*Black Fury* (1935)”, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library. See also Vasey (1997), pp. 200–204.
53. Such pictures were later ridiculed by the British satirists Peter Richardson and Peter Richens in their 1988 film *Strike!* The story concerns an aspiring screenwriter who signs a contract with a Hollywood studio to produce his hard-hitting, real-life depiction of the 1984 anti-Thatcherite miner’s strike.

However, the Hollywood hegemony machine swiftly turns the "socialist epic" into an 1880s all-American action movie starring Al Pacino as Arthur Scargill (the leader of the '84 movement).

54. Production Code File, "*Manhattan Melodrama* (1937)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
55. Production Code File, "*Winterset* (1936)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
56. Ibid.
57. Production Code File, "*Mister Smith goes to Washington* (1939)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
58. Berg (1980), p. 316.
59. *Motion Picture Herald* (February 22, 1936), p. 1. See also Vasey (1997), p. 205.
60. Marybeth Hamilton, "Censoring Mae West" in Couvares (2006), pp. 187–211.
61. David M. Lugowski, "Queering the (New) Deal: Lesbian and Gay Representation and the Depression Era Cultural Politics of Hollywood's Production Code" in *Cinema Journal* v38 n3 (Winter 1999), p. 12.
62. John Kenneth White, *Still Seeing Red* (Westview Press, New York 1998), p. 30.
63. Furhammer and Isaksson (1971), p. 63.
64. This was the title of the federal government's bureau to resolve the unemployment issue by generating and managing enormous public projects.
65. The Federal Theater Project was a quasi-national theatre in which unemployed actors, directors, designers and theatre people more generally were paid by the WPA to produce shows for public consumption.
66. Hallie Flanagan, *Arena* (Blom, New York 1940), p. 204.
67. See McGregor (2007), pp. 211–213.
68. John G. Edgerton to Nelson Rockefeller, May 16, 1933, folder 59, box 94, business interests, RCI-Diego Rivera 1933–1950, RAC.
69. Elan H. Hooter to Nelson Rockefeller, May 15, 1933, folder 59, box 94, business interests, RCI-Diego Rivera 1933–1950, RAC.
70. Ralph M. Easley to Nelson Rockefeller, May 11, 1933, folder 59, box 94, business interests, RCI-Diego Rivera 1933–1950, RAC.
71. *Pittsburgh Massachusetts Eagle*, May 10, 1933, folder 708, box 94, business interests, RCI-Diego Rivera clippings 1933–1957, RAC.
72. *Somerset PA Daily Herald*, May 11, 1933, folder 708, box 94, business interests, RCI-Diego Rivera clippings 1933–1957, RAC.
73. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extreme 1914–1991* (Abacus, London 2007), p. 234.

74. Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New* (Pluto Press, London 1994), p. 41.
75. Johnson (2008), p. 135.
76. Shindler (1996), p. 206.
77. Quoted in Berg (1980), p. 346.
78. Walsh (1996), p. 158.
79. Production Code File, "*Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
80. Walsh (1996), p. 158.
81. Clippings Folder, "*The Mortal Storm* (1940)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
82. Production Code File, "*The Mortal Storm* (1940)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
83. Ibid.
84. Clipping Folder, "*Mission to Moscow* (1942)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
85. Ibid.
86. Production Code File, "*Mission to Moscow* (1942)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
87. Ibid.
88. Legion of Decency (1948), p. 84.
89. Production Code File, "*The Song of Russia* (1943)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
90. Johnson (2008), p. 173.
91. Indeed, President Obama has been routinely vilified as a "socialist" by his political enemies for attempting to implement the very initial stages of what might possibly, in the fullness of time, develop into a universal healthcare system.

## Chapter 4 The Temporal World

1. "McNicholas to Hays 1934", box 47 Will Hays Papers, Indiana State Historical Society.
2. The term race applied here denotes the ethnicity or parental homeland of a specific group or individual. Citizenship is here defined as being both a legal subject of the United States of America, a willing observer of its laws and an advocate of its virtues.
3. Johnson (2008), p. 29.
4. By this phrase I do not refer to the Native peoples but rather to the "secular" American society that existed since the original territories were colonised and which the American Catholic Church "found" upon its arrival from Europe.

5. Clippings Folder, "Boys' Town (1938)", The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive, Margaret Herrick Library.
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73. Billy Wilder's *Some Like it Hot* (1959) is an interesting echo of this theme. Its plot depicts an elderly Pat O'Brien chasing gangsters known as "The Friends of Italian Opera", who include among their number Edward G. Robinson's son.
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87. See Walsh (1996), p. 155; Facey (1974), p. 119; Skinner (1993), pp. 60–61.
88. Ibid.
89. Legion of Decency (1948), p. 5.
90. Ibid, p. 27.
91. This was common practice for the PCA. Indeed, often such pro- and epilogues were written by the Legion, such was the case for *Duel in the Sun* (1947) in which the epilogue informed the audience that the two lead characters had died because they had violated the laws of God.
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95. Marx and Engels (2008), p. 88.

## Conclusion

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2. Walsh (1996), p. 145.
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4. Legion of Decency (1948), p. v.
5. To read Nietzsche's argument in full see Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche: One the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge University Press 2007).

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